

# A Very English Visionary

How the understated radicalism of Arthur Rowe defined Tottenham's style

By Martin Cloake 1st March 2012

**His last public appearance came sitting in an armchair at home, an appropriately humble setting for one of the least demonstrative of the great men of football. It was the final scene of a programme made to mark the centenary of Tottenham Hotspur and Arthur Rowe, the manager who led the side to its first League title in 1951, was asked what the club meant to him. Rowe looked up, set his jaw, opened his mouth, then set his jaw again. He was obviously struggling to contain his emotions. He tried once more to speak, but the words caught, his jaw quivered and he shifted in his seat, his hand gripping his chin as he attempted to regain control. He succeeded and, his eyes coming up to look once more at his questioner, said simply, "I like them. They are a great club and to be associated with them..." — the words threatened to catch once more but he just managed to whisper them — "was nice".**

It is an almost unbearably poignant moment, beautifully edited by a production team who knew the value of silence and space, and one that provides a vivid snapshot of the mixture of English reserve and quiet passion that defined

Arthur Rowe. His story is one of great innovation and ambition, of joy and of crushing sadness. It is a story that is fading both because of the passage of time and because of the light it subsequently enabled to shine. And it is a story that deserves to be told again so that it can regain its rightful place in history.

When the great managers of football are listed these days, Rowe rarely gets a mention. He comes from an age that predates television's grip on football, from an age in which personality had not yet elbowed its way to the fore. True, the game was a mass obsession and Rowe was revered in his time. But he seems to have slipped from the collective memory. If the absence of mass media and the cult of the sporting personality is to blame, though, it makes little sense that Stanley Matthews and Nat Lofthouse are names familiar even to the most cursory student of football. Maybe it's because players have greater status in the collective consciousness than managers. But if that is so, how can the status of Herbert Chapman and Stan Cullis be explained? Rowe was never a man to court the limelight or make extravagant claims for what he did. Like the greatest of the greats, he saw what he did as simply the best way to do the job. And he got on with it as if it was the most natural thing in the world. Which to him it was.

Not only was Rowe a great manager in the English game, he was a great manager for the English game. Arguably, without Rowe, it would have remained constrained and oblivious inside its self-satisfied cocoon of assumed

superiority for far longer than it did. And maybe Rowe is not afforded the status he deserves because the sport does not fully understand what it is he did. Without Rowe, one of the greatest names in English football would not have achieved one of the greatest feats of any club side in the 20th century. Bill Nicholson's double-winning Spurs based a style of play still rated by many who saw it as the greatest ever on an approach set down by Rowe. That side went on to become the first English club to take on and beat the best continental sides and in so doing completed the English game's journey from self-imposed isolation to the heart of the new transnational era. It was Rowe who used a new way of thinking to put a new style of football into practice. Like all genuine visionaries, he recognised that mixing the best of what he had with the best of what he found was the key not simply to interpreting the world, but to changing it. Arthur Rowe was football's quiet revolutionary.

Rowe was born in Tottenham in 1906, within kicking distance of White Hart Lane. When he was 15, he came to the attention of the club and, two years later, he signed as an amateur after playing for nursery clubs at Cheshunt — later to be the training ground which produced a succession of great sides — and Northfleet United. The Northfleet connection enables us to trace a style of play that was to change the football world.

In the early 1920s, Tottenham Hotspur's enlightened

Scottish coach Peter McWilliam came to an arrangement with the Kent club to farm out talented young players to give them experience playing football in the way McWilliam thought it should be played. Think space and shape, angle and incision, flexibility and interchangeability, keeping the ball on the ground and making it do the work.

In 1934, a 19-year-old wing-half called Vic Buckingham signed for Spurs and played his first season at the Northfleet nursery. He went on to make 230 appearances for the club, most of them under the tutelage of McWilliam. When he stopped playing in 1949, he went into management, encouraged by Rowe, whom he viewed as something of a mentor. In 1953-54 Buckingham almost became the first manager to win the modern double, taking the West Bromwich Albion side of Ray Barlow and Ronnie Allen to within four league points of the feat. In 1959 he took his ideas to Ajax of Amsterdam. There he laid the foundations of a system that would come to be known as "Total Football" and discovered a prodigiously gifted young player whom he nurtured and encouraged — Johan Cruyff.

Rowe had played alongside Buckingham and the two men had similar ideas about the game. As a player, Rowe was a cultured centre-half who eschewed the stop-and-hoof approach common at the time in favour of playing the ball out of trouble. He won his first England cap in 1933, in a season in which Spurs finished third in the league. He was a crucial player, something underlined when the team collapsed after injury sidelined him the following season.

He was never the same again, a succession of injuries culminating in a cartilage strain that forced him to retire in 1939.

But Rowe was not finished with the game. A thinking player, he wanted to apply those thoughts as a coach. He travelled to Hungary on a lecture tour in 1939 and made such an impression that László Feleki, a writer for the well-regarded *Nemzeti Sport* magazine, wrote to the English FA chairman Stanley Rous in July 1939 thanking him for recommending Rowe. The Hungarians wanted to employ Rowe as "football professor of the first Hungarian course for football trainers" and to "prepare the Amateur International team for the 1940 Olympics in Helsinki."

Feleki seems to have been acting as an intermediary for the Hungarian FA. The idea, he said in the letter, was to "lay down new foundations for Hungarian football with English help". The flattery was intended to get Rous onside, as Feleki went on to say that he was sure "Rowe will ask for your opinion about the whole matter and I think it would be the best solution if you sent him to us". Closing the letter, Feleki said, "If we had to choose another man we have to be very careful because in this matter not only the football knowledge counts but this trainer must be as intelligent and as fine a gentleman as Rowe." This should not be seen as a foreign association prostrating itself before the all-knowing English, though. Let's not forget that the Hungarian school of football had been developing its ideas for some time. Clearly, there was a meeting of minds.

In the 1930s, a school of thinking based in the coffee houses of central Europe had begun to challenge the aesthetic limitations of the British W-M approach. This was a defensively solid formation which employed stoppers to do just that, stop the opposition from playing, while placing an emphasis on getting the ball forward quickly and directly to powerful forwards. Passing, especially the short and patient style, was viewed as not very British and therefore somewhat suspect. But from the coffee-house school of thinking a more subtle approach developed. As forwards dropped deeper to pick up the ball and a fluid front four rather than a solid line of five emerged, linking the play became more important.

For a man schooled in the Peter McWilliam philosophy of space, shape and making the ball do the work, plunging into a footballing culture that had been developing similar ideas must have been an invigorating experience. For the Hungarians, an Englishman who had proved himself in the cradle of the game but who was also willing and able to take on the new aesthetic must have created quite an impression. Two of those he met on his lecture tour were themselves to go on to have a significant impact on the game — Gusztáv Sebes and Ferenc Puskás.

Rowe never got to take up the role the Hungarian FA was so keen to offer. The outbreak of war forced him to return home and he ended up coaching the army football team. In 1945 he got the manager's job at Chelmsford City and led them to the Southern League title. He had quickly

established a reputation as an innovative and effective coach able to get his ideas across simply to his players. In 1949 Spurs approached him to replace Joe Hulme and, on 4 May, Rowe became the manager of the club he had once played for.

His first signing was a right-back called Alf Ramsey. Ramsey was to be a key component of the new approach Rowe wasted no time in introducing. In his book *Football, My Life*, the club captain Ron Burgess described those early days. "Soon after we reported for training," he wrote, "[Rowe] introduced us to his new playing scheme. At first the whole project was discussed in the dressing-room and as we listened to Arthur's rather revolutionary ideas, I saw expressions of doubt on the faces of some of the lads." It seems the players were soon convinced for, after a fortnight of practice, Burgess told Rowe that he "could not wait" to try the new approach out in a league game. "I realised," wrote Burgess, "that our new tactics might sweep the country."

Burgess's explanation of the new approach is illuminating. For while he described the tactics as "revolutionary", he also said "there was nothing exactly original about them". He wrote, "Our style was merely the adaption of the modern Continental style. It was based on the short pass of 15 to 20 yards, the ball never being held longer than was absolutely necessary by any player." It was a style Rowe had in mind when he signed Ramsey, an attack-minded full-back, but he had to educate him in the new approach

too. He asked his new signing to eschew the long forward pass and instead make a shorter, more accurate pass to a withdrawn outside-right (Sonny Walters). That would give Walters space as the opposing left-back would think twice before pushing up on him. And if Ramsey followed up on the inside, another option would be available. Rowe wanted his team to play from the back, and to prioritise possession. "A good player runs to the ball," he would say. "A bad player runs after it."

The style was to become known as push-and-run, but Burgess explained that there was more to it than that. "The wingers had to play further back than in the normal long-kicking tactics, and were thus brought more into the game, for their inter-changing with inside-forwards was another essential of this scheme." He wrote that he "could no longer consider myself an attacking half-back", because he and the other half-back had to "be in position to take the short ball from the full-backs ready for pushing it on to the inside or wing man". Burgess's colleague at half-back was Bill Nicholson.

It was Rowe who coined the phrase "keep it simple, keep it accurate, keep it quick" that was later to be so associated with Nicholson. And that push-and-run description was used to distinguish the Spurs Way from the kick-and-run approach so prevalent in English football at the time. As Burgess said, "An attack could start from Ted Ditchburn, in goal, and be carried from man to man through the defence, the half-backs, and on to the forwards, without any

recourse to hefty kicking." Rowe, however, was never very fond of the term push-and-run. Years later he said, "You often saw something like our style happening in a match... a side suddenly stringing together short, quick passes and players moving intelligently to give and take them. It's as if the game suddenly got an electric shock. The thing about the Tottenham side I had was that we tried to make it happen all the time."

It was that "trying to make it happen" that helped bring the players onside. Eddie Baily, who played inside-forward in Rowe's team and went on to be Bill Nicholson's assistant manager, said, "The urge to play this more exacting but much more exciting game took us along with the obvious enthusiasm of the man." And Baily also gave more insight into how Rowe's side approached the game when interviewed by Phil Soar for an official history of Spurs in 1982. "We changed things," he said. "We gave the ball to the man who was marked. But other players slipped into support positions to give the man with the ball more options. That in turn depended on how the ball had been given and we had to guarantee that our man received it." This was football played in the head as well as on the grass, but in a system clearly communicated rather than obscured by any fascination with its cleverness.

Spurs went 22 matches unbeaten in that 1949-50 season. They topped the Second Division table for the entire campaign. They finished as champions, nine points clear of their nearest rivals. They scored more goals and conceded

fewer than any of their rivals. And they attracted an average home gate of 54,405 as 1.5 million people flocked to White Hart Lane.

During that season, Spurs had been drawn against Sunderland in the fourth round of the FA Cup. The Wearsiders were third in the First Division at the time and many thought this would be where Spurs stumbled. But Tottenham ran their opponents ragged, ending up 5-1 winners. After the game, the *Tottenham Weekly Herald's* reporter and Rowe himself agreed that they'd both "seen Spurs play better". Years later, Nicholson's players used to complain he rarely gave them credit despite their achievements. If they ever wondered where he got the habit from, this may have been the root.

When Spurs went out to Everton in the next round, though, a question that has become depressingly familiar in the English game began to be asked by a press which harboured a suspicion of this sophisticated challenge to familiar ways. Did Spurs try to play too attractive a style of football when other methods were required?

The return to the top flight gave Spurs the chance to answer the question. In 1950-51, they would come up against the powerhouses of the English game and their fancy continental ideas about passing and moving would be put to a real test. But Rowe was confident in his players and his methods. He told a shareholders meeting in August that his team would not change their style "not for anybody

or a lot of money." He went on, "Since the old offside law changed [in 1925] and since the Arsenal introduced their system of play, very successfully it must be admitted, football, to my mind, has been of a negative type. There is nothing wrong with the Arsenal style, but to work it successfully you have to have a certain number of typed players. If you haven't got these types, your system won't be successfully exploited. Many clubs have tried to copy the Arsenal style without having the men to do it properly. The result has been stalemate. Our method is better — to obtain an appreciation of the fact that the team is more important than the individual. I feel that the individual gets more benefit, too."

In many seasons, the campaign turns on a single game — a game in which much more than a result is decided, in which the manner of the victory signals the emergence of a new force and the dismantling of the old order. The visit of the league leaders Newcastle United to White Hart Lane on 18 November 1950 was one of those days. Spurs won 7-0 and Newcastle left the pitch stunned as they picked their way through the debris of a British style that had been utterly destroyed. The Telegraph reported that Tottenham's style "is all worked out in triangles and squares and when the mechanism of it clicks at speed, as it did on Saturday, with every pass played to the last refined inch on a drenched surface, there is simply no defence against it."

The *Tottenham Weekly Herald's* correspondent Concord filed his report of "Spurs' astonishing 7-0 win" under the

headline "Spurs put new life in British soccer." He wrote, "Spurs have proved beyond all doubt the vast superiority of their new-style soccer... Successful application of this style will, I predict, create a revolution in British soccer. Just as clubs found it necessary to discover an answer to the third-back game, so they will have to remould their ideas to counter Spurs' system."

Burgess was injured that day. He hated being a spectator but, he said, "on this occasion I was glad I was sitting in the stand". It was, he went on, "the finest exhibition of football I had ever seen... I sat enthralled, for I realised for the first time why we had won so many matches with our push-and-run style of play. I was as excited as our most partisan supporter as I watched the close harmony of all departments of the team, the speed and the perfection of movement, with the ball always on the move, and even the great Newcastle team were running around almost aimlessly in their efforts to prevent that spate of goals." The Herald cartoonist Wilding put it more succinctly — "Spurs were enough to make the band jazz it and the Tyne Bridge bow with shame."

Concord was in no doubt as to the significance of Rowe's system. "It should give British football the boost it needs to put us back on top of the soccer world," he said. "Credit for this immensely encouraging development goes to Spurs' manager Arthur Rowe... In his short period with the club he has produced results whose effect will be felt wherever first-class football is played. He has recognised and applied

a fundamental truth, that soccer is a team game and that teamwork alone can bring success."

By December, Spurs were top of the league for the first time in 17 years. In the March they won five and drew two of seven games. On 28 April 1951 they had to beat Sheffield Wednesday at home to secure the title — just as they would 10 years later to capture the first part of the fabled Double. They won 1-0 thanks to a goal from 'the Duke', the Channel Islander Len Duquemin. In securing the title they became only the third side to win the Second and First Division titles in consecutive seasons<sup>1</sup>.

Thousands of fans streamed on to the pitch after the final home game against Liverpool to celebrate. They had one cry: "We want Arthur, we want Arthur!" The Football League President Arthur Drewry presented Burgess with the trophy and in a short speech said, "I not only congratulate them [Spurs] on having won it, but also in the manner in which they did so."

There are echoes there of the quote about style and glory made famous by Danny Blanchflower. At the end of that historic season, Rowe said, "It's a great truth that if you try things once and you like them, you try them again. That is what we are hoping to do in the future." It was this striving to achieve the same heights that was to lead to Rowe's departure from Spurs, and to exact a terrible price.

For two seasons Spurs had swept all before them. In doing

so they had shaken the English game to its foundations. They were a progressive side which was important in an era when — despite the best efforts of the domestic football establishment — the game was becoming internationalised. Old habits die hard, though, and as Jonathan Wilson observes in *Inverting the Pyramid*, "Spurs were regarded with suspicion, despite their success." It may be stretching it too far to suggest that that suspicion has contributed, in some quarters, to a lingering suspicion of Spurs that goes beyond 'flash Londoner' stereotypes. But look down the years at Bobby Robson's doubts about Glenn Hoddle or Alan Hansen's frequent intonation of the mantra that "Spurs will always let you down" and you get the feeling that there's something not quite right about the Lilywhites.

The following season Spurs again thrilled, but finished second in the league to Manchester United. The FA Cup continued to evade them. The team was getting older and Rowe was perhaps guilty of staying loyal for too long to the men who had taken the team to its greatest heights. Between 1953 and 1956 Spurs finished 16th, 16th and 18th. Matt Busby's first great Manchester United side had become the dominant force. Rowe took it badly. In January 1954 he suffered a nervous breakdown, brought on by the worry and the ceaseless work he was putting in to try and turn things around. He returned to work in July, but defeat to York City in the fifth round of the FA Cup in February 1955 proved the final indignity. He suffered his second

breakdown and was admitted to hospital in April. In the July he resigned, knowing he was unable to do any more for the club he loved so much. He would never return to White Hart Lane.

But like all great managers, Rowe had established the foundations that would bring future glory for his club. With Rowe handing the reins of management to his long-serving assistant manager Jimmy Adamson, his former half-back Bill Nicholson moved into the role of club coach. Nicholson was heavily influenced by Rowe's ideas about how the game should be played. In his book *Glory Glory, My Life with Spurs*, Nicholson described Rowe as "a passionate talker and thinker".

Nicholson said, "I learned a lot from Arthur". But the Yorkshireman also benefitted from something else Rowe had put in place. Just as the understanding Rowe's captain Ronnie Burgess had of how the manager's style of play could work was vital to that first great modern Spurs side, so the understanding Nicholson's captain had of his style was key to the second. Nicholson's captain was Danny Blanchflower. And it had been Rowe who convinced Blanchflower to join Spurs.

In 1954 Blanchflower was the most sought after half-back in the country, known as a thoughtful, skilful player. Blanchflower's interest in finding new ways to play and improve the game, and his willingness to say what he thought publically, meant he was viewed as a potential

problem by many of those who ran football. Rowe saw him as a potential asset and it's no surprise that two such forward thinkers were drawn towards each other. In *The Double and Before*, Blanchflower said of Rowe, "He was much respected within the game. His push-and-run philosophy and the manner in which he had guided the great Tottenham team of the late forties and early fifties to such soccer delights had been a great source of inspiration to many of the young hopeful players that I knew." Blanchflower liked Rowe's "honest and direct approach" when Aston Villa, then the Irishman's club, gave Rowe permission to speak to him. "He said that I struck him as the kind of player he was looking for," remembered Blanchflower. "He wanted people who would fight for themselves and what they believed in, because if they didn't want to fight for themselves, they wouldn't want to fight for him." And, in what may well have been the clinching phrase, Rowe told Blanchflower, "He knew I would like the thriving atmosphere at Tottenham, the atmosphere of good football for the sake of good football."

Rowe eventually got his man. In doing so he made his most successful and inspiring signing, and connected the glory he had achieved to the glories the club was to achieve in the future. Blanchflower had been unhappy for some time with what he saw as a lack of ambition and a refusal to embrace new methods at Aston Villa, the club he had played for since his transfer from Barnsley in 1951. With both North London clubs pursuing him, Blanchflower chose

Spurs because Rowe convinced him that "their style of play was more in keeping with the future than that of Arsenal's." Rowe knew his great title-winning side was breaking up and Blanchflower was an important part of his effort to build a second great team. After Blanchflower's debut against Manchester City at Maine Road in December 1953, Rowe said it was "the first time for weeks that I was able to sit back with confidence and enjoy the match."

But the feeling of confidence did not last long. In February 1955 came that Cup defeat in the snow at York. "It must have been a bitter blow for Arthur Rowe because shortly afterwards he folded up, the victim of too much care and anxiety for the troubles of his team," Blanchflower said. "The news of his break-up greatly surprised me. He was a fine, understanding man, and I wondered what inner conflict had sapped his strength."

Rowe was gone, but he had firmly embedded the Spurs Way, a way that was a part of the club before he arrived but which he took to new levels. Blanchflower was a more forthcoming and lyrical user of language than Rowe — the Double-winning side's winger Cliff Jones recalls "he could certainly talk, could Danny" — and this irritated some observers. But Blanchflower's incessant quest for "glory" was born not of posturing but of an obsession with taking his craft to new heights. In that he was no different to Rowe. And, like Rowe, Blanchflower looked far beyond domestic shores to gain inspiration. At the 1958 World Cup in Sweden he continued to study opposition tactics closely as

Northern Ireland enjoyed what remains their best finals campaign, bringing back innovations such as using the last man in the wall to line it up after seeing the way the France team of Just Fontaine bent the ball around defensive walls to score. On the plane back from Sweden he told Joe Mercer and Stan Cullis, "Tottenham are going to win the Double within the next few years."

He was right, of course. Bill Nicholson's Super Spurs won the first modern Double in 1961, and then, in 1963, went on to become the first British side to lift a European trophy — and they did so playing a brand of football widely acknowledged as an updated version of Rowe's push-and-run. By that time Rowe was back in management, but only after undergoing the horrors of electric shock treatment at a sanatorium in Kent. His son Graham was 16 years old at the time. "I never noticed any difference in my Dad, since he was essentially a quiet man and if he voiced any problems it was to my mother, not me," he said. "He kept a lot within and to me, his problems were disguised. I do know that one of the pressures came from one or two board members at Spurs who were not understanding of his loyalty to his great team."

It was at around that time that Graham decided to emigrate to Canada. Being a minor, he needed written permission from his parents. "Mother, my brother and I visited him in the sanatorium," he remembers. "Dad was sitting on a bench in the grounds. Mother and I explained my wanting to go to Canada, and Dad signed the paper. He was not

himself, he was withdrawn and I've wondered ever since whether he knew what he was signing, although it never came up again."

Graham cannot remember exactly when that sanatorium stay ended, but he does recall that his father became a spokesman for a boot company that had designed a low-cut boot that carried the Arthur Rowe name. "He travelled extensively promoting the boot," said Graham, "but he did not particularly enjoy it, since he was a homebody and enjoyed being at home with Mum."

As Nicholson's side were thrilling the country at the start of their historic campaign, Rowe was at Crystal Palace, helping the club win promotion in his first season with them. He joined at the urging of Arthur Wait, the chairman who oversaw Palace's rise from the Fourth to the First Division during the 1960s. Graham Rowe remembers the club's style of play at the time was so appreciated that it was drawing bigger crowds than many teams from higher divisions. "The Palace gave Dad a testimonial game in appreciation of his tenure," says Graham. "Tottenham never did, and I think that was wrong."

But ill health forced Rowe out of the manager's seat again in 1963. He returned briefly to Selhurst Park in 1966, and also had stints at West Brom, Leyton Orient and Millwall. "He could visit any ground in the country and be a guest of the club when scouting," said Graham. "But he preferred to pay his way in to the terraces where he could make his

observations and leave early to go home without embarrassing anyone."

He was never again, though, to touch the heights he had once scaled. In the early 1970s he was curator of the PFA-backed Football Hall of Fame in London's Oxford Street, and it was there that the *Daily Express* football writer Norman Giller struck up an enduring friendship with him.

Giller describes Rowe as "softly spoken yet, when necessary, assertive" and says "we had many a long conversation about his career in the game in general and his management of Spurs in particular". Giller recalls that "an old journalist colleague, Steve Richard, was PR for the museum, and we used to take Arthur for long lunches when we would bask in his memories. He was not in any way a boastful man, but he made no secret of the fact that his time in Hungary had helped set new standards of football.

"Of all the people I have met in the game, few have been able to match Arthur for explaining the game in an easy to understand way that made it all seem so simple. Arthur hated tacticians who talked what he called mumbo-jumbo. 'Don't complicate the game,' he used to say. 'I used to play what were literally wall passes against a wall when I was a kid. The game is just as simple as that, and the ball is still round.'

"Arthur was a thorough gentleman, a quietly-spoken person who would never try to hog a conversation or the limelight. I

sensed that he never had total belief in himself, and I don't think he could have handled the millionaire prima donnas of the modern game. His push-and-run team was moulded in his own image, keeping things simple and always playing with total commitment and with dignity.

"Not in an arrogant way, he would draw comparisons between the Hungarian team that destroyed England in 1953 and his 1950-51 Spurs side. His eyes would twinkle as he would say, 'Imagine if we could have had Puskás in our attack ...' He had coached Ferenc as a boy! Above all, Arthur was an honest, dignified person who was always a man of his word; the sort of bloke anybody would have been proud to have as a friend."

Another Fleet Street stalwart, Brian Scovell, also remembers Rowe's "courtesy and willingness to help" and says, "his chosen style of play was a clear change from most of the rather stolid, predictable norm of British football up to this point... and I know from chats with Bill Nicholson and Alf Ramsey that a great number of players in his teams had picked up habits of 'letting the ball do the running' which shaped their own careers, and then of the sides they came to manage."

Rowe died on 5 November 1993, aged 87. In his obituary for The *Independent*, Reg Drury wrote that Rowe had "one of the sharpest soccer brains the English game has ever known" and recalled two conversations that underline Rowe's down-to-earth approach. The manager described

his job as "just a case of doing the obvious. Football's a simple game, it's the players who make it difficult," and said "all you need to remember is that 50 per cent of the people in the game are bluffers. So a decent manager's halfway there when he starts out."

Arthur's son Graham, who watched that demolition of Newcastle as a schoolboy while sitting on the bench next to the tunnel that led from the pitch to the dressing-room, said, "My father was a modest man who did not like or seek the limelight. Football was his passion, and it was this passion that excluded other activities and hobbies from his life. He fiddled around in the garden, but he was not an avid reader except for newspapers. We had three delivered daily. He played no golf except in his younger days, no tennis... His passion consumed his thoughts and time. Later in life he read more, he had the time. He liked James Michener and John Steinbeck, and after I had spent a year and a half traveling the South Pacific and Southeast Asia, I introduced him to James Norman Hall, co-author of *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and Eugene Burdick. He loved those books and he told me that he read them time and again."

Graham speaks about his dad with real affection, and two tales he tells of his formative years stand out. "Dad was a quiet, sensitive man and rarely got angry," he remembers. "One time he did was in Chelmsford in the late 1940s. I was playing football in the street against his instructions and a wayward kick smashed a street lamp. I was playing with the son of one of the players on Dad's Chelmsford team who

lived a few doors along from us. The player's name was Charlie Hurst and the lad I was playing with was Geoff." Two decades later, some more accurate finishing from Geoff at Wembley secured England's only World Cup.

Graham also remembers his dad asking him what he wanted to do when he finished grammar school in 1954. "He said to me, 'Son, whatever you choose to do, even if you choose to be a street cleaner, I expect you to have the cleanest street in town.' He was a perfectionist. I chose university, but soon got bored. So Dad suggested sports journalism. A friend of his, Reg Hayter, was leaving Reuters, where he had been a cricket correspondent, to start his own sports agency. So I became Reg's first employee as an office boy, learning the ropes on Fleet Street.

"Dad was a revolutionary in football. He designed players' socks with vertical stripes at the top instead of plain or with hoops, so that players could better distinguish their teammates while running with the ball. He was happy to let his team do the talking for him on the pitch, and they were very eloquent. Anybody who saw that push-and-run side will, I know, never forget it."

And yet. The name of Arthur Rowe has not carried through the ages in the way many others have, but he is a pivotal figure who influenced football at arguably its most vital point. In the 1950s the genuine visionaries were battling against the game itself to make sure English clubs did not get left behind. Chelsea and Manchester United were

banned from competing in Europe despite seeing the benefits of doing so. The British establishment's distress in dealing with the reality that it no longer ruled the waves was as nothing compared to the football establishment's refusal to acknowledge that it had to engage with the foreign game if it was to survive, let alone prosper. What Rowe did was show that a combination of domestic and international methods could get results. He broke the hold the traditional English way had on the domestic game. In establishing the Spurs Way, he laid the foundations of one of the modern game's great clubs. Long before Blanchflower's famous and often misunderstood observation that the game was "about glory", Rowe realised that it was not just the winning that was important but also the style of the win. What many forget about both men, though, is that they saw the winning as every bit as important as the style. Their point was that you could not separate the two and stay true to football.

Rowe's achievements were made in a very English, understated way. He was a quiet revolutionary. And perhaps this too is why his name has faded. It should not be allowed to.