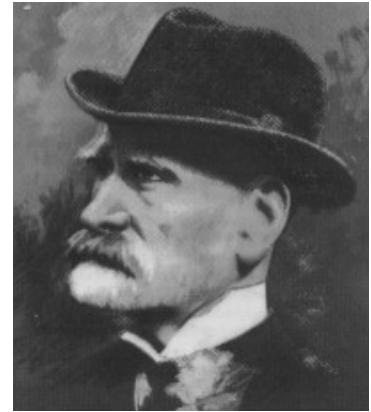


Ebenezer Cobb Morley

The world has never taken proper note of achievements of **Ebenezer Cobb Morley** and the vital contribution he made to the game of association football. The Yorkshire-born lawyer came to Barnes in 1858, aged 27, and threw himself into the life of the community with enormous energy. A gifted sporting enthusiast in an era when team games became a passion of vigorous Victorians, he divided his energies between land and water, first making his mark on the Thames.



Morley founded the Barnes and Mortlake Regatta in 1862, which with occasional gaps has continued to today. An excellent oarsman, he competed regularly on the Thames and in 1864 rowed in the Grand Challenge Cup at Henley.

But it was a year earlier when Morley made his impact on what was to become the most popular game across the globe. Football to that time had been a disorganised pastime, played under a range of local rules with wide variants, and no organised competitions. If a team from a particular school or club wished to play another, there was often great difficulty in agreeing exactly how the game should proceed, and under what rules.

Morley was founder-captain of Barnes Football Club, and a player of much ability, with ambitions for the betterment of the game. Noting that cricket had laws agreed under a controlling body, the Marylebone Cricket Club, Morley decided a similar organisation could put football on a sound and organised footing. He wrote in 1863 to the main sporting paper of the day, *Bell's Life in London*, proposing "an association of football clubs" to allow matches to be organised under an agreed code of rules.

Morley wrote also to the major public schools, which were active pioneers of football, but - jealous of their independence, status and traditions - few responded with any enthusiasm. Morley's Yorkshire determination and his lawyer's thoroughness would not allow him to rest. He convened a meeting of interested parties at the Freemason's Tavern, Holborn, on October 26, 1863 - and the Football Association was born.

He was appointed the first FA Secretary, his major task being to draft rules for the game which after much debate and disagreement, were adopted by a majority of clubs, first largely in London, and gradually across the country. In 1867 he became FA President, and presented the new FA Cup when Wanderers beat Royal Engineers 1-0 in 1872 at The Oval.

Morley died on November 20, 1924, aged 93, and was buried in Barnes Old Cemetery, his grave now long forgotten and neglected.