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Many famous football clubs can trace their origins from humble beginnings in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with a number rising from the background of the smoke and grime of industrial England. One such club is West Ham United, born out of, and owing its existence to Thames Ironworks FC, a shipbuilding company club founded in the final years of the Victorian age. The aim of this book is to explain something of the history surrounding the original club's foundation, to record the triumphs and failures in its short existence, and to describe the problems subsequently encountered when the decision was made to make the transition from amateur status, when the players involved kicked the ball about more from the relief of their daily grind, and to enjoy the game for its own sake, to that of a purely professional organisation when the club's balance sheet took on greater importance, and players joined the club more from a mercenary viewpoint than playing purely for pleasure.

A thumbnail history of Thames Ironworks & Shipbuilding Company is covered in the introduction, along with a profile of Mr Arnold Hills, the Chairman and Managing Director of the company, who was the central figure in the financing and consolidation of the football club and instrumental in its progression to West Ham United.

