



## Arthur Wharton, A Black Star Shines in Space By David Urion

Arthur sailed from a land afar; Accra, Ghana.

where empire enclaves handed a debut to many captive slaves.

Lucky this cruel trade ended, before his swift-footed body descended.

His father was a Wesleyan, forgave unspeakable sins wreaked by fellow man.

Arthur was ruled by varied task-masters, wouldn't follow in footprints of Celtic ancestors.

Goalie for Sheffield, Stockport, Darlington... Rotherham, Stalybridge, Preston...

Crowds shouted "darkie!" because of his skin, judged only the surface, not what was in.

Hard-hearted bigots had blinkered eyes, as a great sprint champion won prize after prize.

His brave track displays earned him plenty of plaudits, a majestic prince in the land of coal pits.

Victorian Britain's heartland ruled by colonialist gentry, foolish manners, backs starch-stiff like sentries.

Had a 'family affair', was it for love or just the love of a dare?

Survived personal repression; endured poverty of The Great Depression.

Where once his reputation ensured a good gate, disowned he was left to his fate.

Womanising Arthur with his good-looking face, attracted problems, finally brought disgrace.

Proved time and again was of sterner stuff; packed up kit; withdrew his labour; usually left in a huff.

Why, oh why did this charitable bloke finish up unnoticed, broken, and broke?

Stylish ice-cool manner and clowning grace, Arthur effortlessly ran his rebellious race.

Proud Arthur stood up to pressure and threats, but stubbornness left insurmountable debts.

A radical working class hero of unique sporting renown was quickly forgotten, even in Rotherham Town.

Where once roared on to fame and glory, hauling coal trucks at Yorkshire Main Pit that's the end to his story. In a pauper's grave cold Arthur lay, nigh on 70 year almost to the day.

To add to this sad, sorry shame, his body was buried in soil bearing no name.

Coffin laid out in a steep-walled trench, another ex-miner tainted by poverties stench.

A black man with attitude many whites thought rude. Records erased for showing ingratitude.

Until by chance dusty mementos were found, and the search began for the now hallowed ground.

mould maker, heart-taker, convention-shaker, record-breaker.

Football Unites helped recover his past; no longer unknown, a hero at last.

Vociferous Arthur never toed the line. Wrong place. Wrong race. Wrong time.

New Edlington Cemetery; tranquil resting spot, a still shiny headstone sits on its well-kept plot where the gold coast showman lies with his tomb engraved. Did he die a freeman, or an unshackled slave?