



# The Story of Arthur Wharton

## Slide 1: Title slide

## Slide 2: Who was Arthur?

On slide: Photo of Arthur and below commentary

### Commentary:

Arthur was...

- ❖ The first man to run 100yards in 10 seconds
- ❖ The first black professional footballer
- ❖ A multi-talented sportsman, pioneer and celebrity of his day

## Slide 3: Arthur's Early Years

On the slide: Photos of Arthur's Ghanaian family and Gold Coast

### Commentary:

- ❖ Arthur was born in 1865 in the Gold Coast, now known as Ghana in West Africa.
- ❖ He grew up in Accra, the capital and lived there until he left for England to study at the age of nine.
- ❖ Arthur was born in a significant time for relations between Britain and Africa. These relations led to what we call 'multiculturalism' today. The British Empire had been taking land and resources from across the world for a long time and Arthur's early years saw the British working hard to take control of The Gold Coast.
- ❖ Arthur grew up amongst British people, mostly in positions of power and learned English and played sports like football and cricket which had been introduced by them.



## Slide 4: Arthur's Heritage

**On the slide: Map of Arthur's heritage and African colonisation**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ Arthur was of multiple-heritage and his family background reflects colonial relationships between Europe, Africa and the Caribbean at the time.
- ❖ Victorians believed Africans were inferior to whites, although colonialism depended upon positive relationships with 'native' people to help bring about colonial rule.
- ❖ Arthur's father, Henry Wharton, was born in Grenada in the Caribbean. His own father was a Scottish merchant and sea captain and his mother was the daughter of a Grenadian slave woman. Henry went to the Gold Coast as a Methodist minister and missionary.
- ❖ Arthur's mother, Annie Florence Grant, was also of mixed race and her father, John C. Grant, was a Scottish trader. Annie's mother, AmaEgyiriba, was part of the Fante Royal Family. The Fante people were the dominant ethnic group in the coastal part of the Gold Coast, so Arthur came from a wealthy, aristocratic family.
- ❖ At 9 years old, Arthur was sent to school in London. He stayed 4 years. At 17, he came back to England with three cousins to study at Shoal Hill Methodist College in Cannock, Staffordshire. As he had lost his father, Arthur's uncle, F.C Grant, who owned the 'Gold Coast Times' newspaper, paid for him and his cousins to attend.
- ❖ Arthur studied religious theology for three years. He was expected to become a teacher or missionary like his father. During this time, he honed his skills in sprinting, cycling, football, cricket and rugby.
- ❖ At 20, Arthur moved to Cleveland College in County Durham and took up a range of athletics. He was known to dip in and out of rugby and cycling during his athletics career but it was sprinting, cricket and football where Arthur made his mark.

## Slide 5: Arthur the Runner (5)

**On the slide: Postcard of Arthur (front and back) 1988**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ This is a postcard of Arthur where he stands proud with the Prince Hassan Cup after breaking the World Record.



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- ❖ At the age of 21 (1886, while still at Cleveland College), Arthur kicked off his serious sporting career by setting the world record for the 100 yard sprint at the Amateur Athletic Association's Championship at Stamford Bridge, London. He ran it in an incredible ten seconds flat – 'even time'.
- ❖ The back of the postcard reads...'To Arthur Wharton, won 2 years in succession time, 100 Yards in 10 seconds. First man in England to accomplish it. Challenged the world. Nobody took the challenge. June 1888'.

### Slide 6: Arthur the Runner (6)

On the slide: Below newspaper quote

Commentary:

- ❖ The following year (1887) he defended his title and came first yet again. Many papers commented on Arthur's unusual running style. He was said to run bent forward on the flat of his foot. (Darlington & Stockton Times, 5/6/1886) said:
- ❖ *"He has neither system nor style, but he runs like an express engine with full steam on from first to last with a result that makes both system and style unnecessary".*

### Slide 7: Arthur the Runner (7)

On the slide: clip about Arthur winning at Stamford Bridge (2minutes) / Old sketch of Arthur winning at Stamford Bridge (INTERNET ACCESS NEEDED)

Commentary:

- ❖ In 1888, he moved to Sheffield to become a 'pedestrian', that is, a professional runner.
- ❖ At the time, Sheffield was a renowned centre for pedestrianism; this is, running (although 'race-walking' was also referred to as pedestrianism). In those days, the best athletes had to run with a 'handicap', meaning their slower opponents were given a head start.
- ❖ Arthur's achievements included winning the Sheffield Handicap – one of the top national pedestrian events of the year – at the Queen's Ground, Hillsborough, in September 1888, in front of around 4,000 spectators. At the time, the Sheffield Daily Telegraph, described him as *"travelling like a racehorse"*.
- ❖ Arthur would retire from professional running in 1890 to concentrate on his football career.



## Slide 8: Arthur the Runner (8)

On the slide: Below quote

Commentary:

- ❖ Gambling on races was common among spectators with huge amounts being wagered. Athletes would take backhanders as incentives to lose. But Arthur wanted to race fairly and he wasn't afraid of anyone.
- ❖ In one newspaper interview he said: *"I recollect a man once offering me £20 to lose a race. I asked him if he knew who he was speaking to, and he said, of course he did, but I told him I would run and if he ever made an offer like that again, I would report him to the Athletics Association"*.
- ❖ £20 was a huge amount of money in those days and no doubt much needed by Arthur to supplement his poor wage.

## Slide 9: Arthur the Footballer (9)

On the slide: Arthur at Darlington FC.

Commentary:

- ❖ Arthur I became probably the best goal keeper in the North and played with some of the great teams of his era. - He was described by the local press as: 'magnificent', 'invincible', 'unapproachable', 'superb', 'wonderful'- Arthur could play in any position.
- ❖ Arthur started playing football for local teams when he was still at college.
- ❖ In 1885 he played regularly as an amateur for Darlington Football Club. For the next 2 years he was selected for several district and county representative teams in the North, while, at the same time, excelling as a sprinter.

## Slide 10: Arthur the Footballer (10)

On the slide: Clip about Arthur at Preston North End (1mintues) (INTERNET ACCESS NEEDED)

Commentary:

- ❖ Notably, in 1887 he signed for Preston North End as an amateur who could play in their FA Cup matches. Preston were then one of England's top teams, known as the 'Invincibles', and one of Wharton's finest footballing achievements was helping them reach the 1887 FA Cup semi-final. He continued to play for Darlington, helping them win the Cleveland Cup in 1887.



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- ❖ The Football League, which marked the beginning of professional football, began in 1888 with 12 teams. It was then that Arthur became the first black professional footballer when he joined Rotherham Town in 1889 in the Midland League.

### Slide 11: Arthur the Footballer (11)

**On the slide: Arthur at Rotherham Town FC**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ During his time with Rotherham Town he helped them win the Midland League in 1892 and 1893, and then to win election to the second division of the Football League for the 1893-4 season.
- ❖ In 1894, Arthur signed for Sheffield United. The following year he became the first black professional footballer to play in the First Division when he made his debut in their 2-0 defeat away to Sunderland.

### Slide 12: Arthur the Footballer (12)

**On the slide: Arthur in his footie kit / At Stalybridge Rovers**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ Arthur made three first team appearances for Sheffield United, but was unable to dislodge the giant William 'Fatty' Foulke from his position as goalkeeper.
- ❖ Arthur returned to Rotherham Town in 1895 then joined Stalybridge Rovers in the Lancashire League in 1896 as a player and coach, making him the first black manager.
- ❖ He moved to nearby Ashton North End in 1897 and back to Stalybridge when Ashton went bankrupt in 1898.
- ❖ He returned to the Football League with Stockport County in 1901 at the age of 36 before retiring from professional football in 1902.

### Slide 13: Arthur's on pitch antics (13)

**On the slide: Clip about Arthur's football skills (1 min 15 secs) Cartoon of Arthur in goal by Archie Birch (INTERNET ACCESS NEEDED)**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ Arthur's best position in football was as a goalkeeper (strange perhaps for a world-record holding sprinter)



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- ❖ He was known for his camaraderie and unusual antics on the pitch and there are several references to them in the local and national newspapers of the time.
- ❖ Opinions were mixed; some said he was unreliable, unpredictable and behaved like a showman. The Athletic News in September 1887 for example, described him as *"the coolest customer that has ever stood between the goal posts"*, but not as a compliment, rather to point out that Arthur seemed too casual and arrogant in his approach.

### Slide 14: Arthur's on pitch antics (14)

On the slide: Below quote

Commentary:

- ❖ As many Victorians believed in the notion of Scientific Racism, (that the physical makeup of Africans marked them as an inferior race in terms of their standing, intellect and capabilities), Arthur was also 'put in his place' in the newspapers of the time through racial slurs. The most famous one:
- ❖ *'Is the darkie's pate too thick for it to dawn upon him that between the posts is no place for a skylark? By some it's called coolness - bosh!'*  
(Football News and Athletic Journal, 29 October 1887).

### Slide 15: Arthur's on pitch antics (15)

On the slide: Below quote

Commentary:

- ❖ Many reporters were impressed by Arthur's skills too and thought he should play for England. There were rave reviews of some of his goalkeeping displays:
- ❖ "In a match between Rotherham and Sheffield Wednesday at Olive Grove, I saw Wharton jump, take hold of the crossbar, catch the ball between his legs and cause three onrushing forwards to fall into the net. I have never seen a similar save since and I have been watching football for over fifty years"  
(Sheffield Telegraph & Independent, 12/1/1942).

### Slide 16: Arthur's on pitch antics (16)

On the slide: Below quote and section of Darlington team photo

Commentary:

- ❖ At that time, goalkeepers could handle the ball anywhere in their own half of the



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pitch, and could be charged down even if they didn't have the ball, making it a dangerous position. Arthur was known for punching the ball a long way and for crouching in the corner of the goal – both habits may have been to protect himself from opponents, they certainly impressed some:

- ❖ *“Wharton is without doubt one of the most capable goal custodians in the country, and is undoubtedly deserving of a place in any international team.”* (Northern Echo, 26 Feb 1887).

### Slide 17: Arthur the Cricketer (17)

**On the slide: Sketches of Arthur playing cricket by Archie Birch**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ The longest record of Arthur's sporting activity is in cricket which he played for at least 34 years from when he first came to England.
- ❖ In those days, it was not unusual for footballers to play cricket in the summer season, and some clubs ran both football and cricket teams – including Darlington Cricket and Football Club, which Arthur joined at the beginning of his sporting career.

### Slide 18: Arthur the Cricketer (18)

**On the slide: List of known cricket clubs and dates he played**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ Arthur first played cricket professionally for Greasbrough in 1889 at the age of 23 while with Rotherham Town Football Club. He played on and off for 6 years and also played for other local teams including Rawmarsh and Rotherham Borough Police. While playing football for Stalybridge, he played cricket professionally for them during the 1896 season.

### Slide 19: Arthur the Cricketer (19)

**On the slide: Clip about Arthur's biggest cricketing win at Rotherham Town (1minute) and below quote (INTERNET ACCESS NEEDED)**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ After retiring from football in 1902, Arthur continued playing cricket for Rotherham Town in 1907 at the age of 40. Here, Arthur is recorded to have delivered one of his greatest games against Denaby, when he scored 86 not out. The Rotherham Advertiser, (10/8/1907), said:



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- ❖ "...the 'coloured gentleman'...played a wonderful innings of forceful cricket...he put on 16 runs in one over, and he hit two successive balls out of the ground, for six each...I never thought Arthur could hit so hard, and play such sound and merry cricket".
- ❖ In 1914, he was offered a job as a cricket coach in County Durham, but he sadly declined it as it didn't pay a living wage and no other work was available. Even when he became a miner, he continued to play for his local mining teams, Denaby Main and Yorkshire Main Colliery until at least 1916.

### Slide 20: Arthur's life in Victorian Britain (20)

On the slide: Picture of Victorian soup kitchens/printing press

Commentary:

- ❖ Life in early 1900s Britain was tough if you weren't one of the wealthy few.
- ❖ The Industrial Revolution, (the move to new and faster production processes), intensified in Britain during the late 1800s and many people were poor and worked long hours in factories and mines.
- ❖ Sports reflected this and even professional sport wasn't the well paid, well regulated and glamorous affair it is today.

### Slide 21: Arthur's life in Victoria Britain (21)

On the slide: Pictures of pubs Arthur managed

Commentary:

- ❖ Often football clubs would arrange other jobs for a player due to poor wages and it's likely that these jobs were the more desirable 'sweetener' jobs that encouraged loyalty from players.
- ❖ Across his footballing career Arthur was offered a number of jobs to supplement his earnings and there are records that Arthur, (who was known to like a drink), managed several pubs in Sheffield and Rotherham.
- ❖ His first was the Albert Tavern on Albert Street, Masbrough, Rotherham, in 1891. He also had a spell running the Plough Inn on Greasbrough Road, Thornhill, Rotherham.
- ❖ On joining Sheffield United in 1894, he took over the Sportsman Cottage on Button Lane in Sheffield city centre.



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- ❖ The 1901 census, taken shortly before Arthur joined Stockport County, records him as being a tobacconist, running a shop in Old Street, Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire.
- ❖ For a top professional sportsman such as Arthur, who was often a local, and for a brief period, national celebrity, alcohol-fuelled celebrations were common. Running pubs, Arthur was known to like a drink and become an increasing indulgence as he got older.

### Slide 22: Family life

**On the slide: Clip talking to Shelia Leeson, Arthur's Granddaughter, about her discovery of Arthur (2mins 40secs) and a picture of Shelia Leeson at Wembley 2011 (INTERNET ACCESS NEEDED)**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ In 1890 at the age of 24, Arthur married Emma Lister, the daughter of a plumber, in Masbrough, Rotherham.
- ❖ The 1911 census entry states that Arthur had one child with Emma who died.
- ❖ There is, however, a convincing argument that Arthur also fathered one or possibly two children with his wife's sister Martha. Arthur was a handsome man of 'exotic' appearance and local celebrity so was no doubt seen as a great catch like the footballers of today.
- ❖ Sheila's story...  
In 1996, Sheila Leeson, Arthur's granddaughter, replied to a letter from Phil Vasili in the Rotherham Advertiser asking if anyone remembered Arthur. Having found some photos and newspaper cuttings about Arthur that had belonged to her mother, Sheila contacted Vasili with her findings. Shortly after, she discovered that Arthur was buried in an unmarked pauper's grave in Edlington near Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

### Slide 23: Retirement from sport

**On the slide: Picture of Arthur in the Home Guards / Army**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ During the First World War (1914-1918), Arthur was known to become a soldier and served as a corporal in the Reserves (the Territorial Force), acting as a Home Guard, rather than serving aboard.



## **Slide 24: Arthur the Miner (24)**

**On the slide: Picture of Arthur during his mining years and Yorkshire Miners (INTERNET ACCESS NEEDED)**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ When Arthur retired from his sporting career, like other working class athletes of his time, he needed to find work to survive. Unsurprisingly, he became a miner and went 'down the pit' like so many men during that time in the North of England.
- ❖ Despite his tiring job, he continued to play cricket. Many mines at the time employed hundreds or thousands of men and most had their own football and cricket teams.
- ❖ As Arthur is known to have played cricket for Denaby Main in 1905-6 and 1909: he may well have worked at Denaby Main Colliery at that time but no record has been found.

## **Slide 25: Arthur the Miner (25)**

**On the slide: Clip about Arthur's experience of mining (18 secs) and picture of Arthur during his mining years (INTERNET ACCESS NEEDED)**

**Commentary:**

- ❖ The 1911 census shows Arthur as living in Moorthorpe, South Elmsall, West Yorkshire, and his occupation is given as a 'collier (hewer)'. This would have been a very physical job cutting coal from the seam. It's likely that he worked at either South Kirkby Colliery or Frickley Colliery nearby.
- ❖ Coal mining was a very tough job. Miners worked long hours in the dark and wet with little ventilation. Many got injured or ill. Stunted growth, crippled legs, curvature of the spine, skin irritations, heart disease, ruptures, asthma, bronchitis and rheumatism were caused by a life of mining. Arthur would have been very fit when he started and likely amongst the oldest miners working, as life expectancy in those days was very young.
- ❖ Arthur spent the last 15 years of his life living in the village of Edlington near Doncaster, and working at Yorkshire Main Colliery. Here he worked as a haulage hand until his death in 1930 at 65. This was a dangerous and physically demanding job, involving hauling full coal trucks weighing 1.5 tons each.



## Slide 26: Arthur the Miner (26)

On the slide: Strike of 1926

Commentary:

- ❖ It's likely, as Arthur was a member of the Yorkshire Miners' Association, that he will have taken part in the General Strike of 1926. Many miners were on strike for seven months in protest at plans to increase their hours and reduce their pay. Terrible hardship and poverty was experienced in mining communities as a result.

## Slide 27: Arthur's death

On the slide: Pictures of Arthur's headstone

Commentary:

- ❖ Arthur died in December 1930 aged 65 'after a long and painful illness', (Doncaster Chronicle, 19/12/1930). The main cause of death was said to be cancer of the upper lip. The last known photo of him as a miner clearly shows the growth on his nose. He died at Springwell House Public Assistance Institution, Balby, Doncaster and was buried in an unmarked pauper's grave in Edlington.
- ❖ The Doncaster Gazette reported that at the funeral there was "*a fairly large attendance which was representative of all the sports and organisations he had been connected with*".

## Slide 28: Memories of Arthur

On the slide: Clip of Alwyn Tatum remembering Arthur and below quote

Commentary:

- ❖ In an interview for BBC Two's Black Britain (1997), local Edlington resident, Alwyn Tatum, recalls seeing Arthur when he was a lad, physically fit in his sixties, running laps in the colliery sports ground. He recalled:
- ❖ "*There was no fat on him, it were all muscle. It were like looking at a greyhound. They always used to say he could catch pigeons*"

END