

The match took place on a Wednesday and Villa arrived on the Tuesday. They looked in the peak of condition. The weather was fine and much warmer than Tuesday although a strong North East wind was blowing. Meehan returned at right back for Sunderland and Johnstone moved to left half with Auld dropping out. The pitch was in pretty fair condition with a sprinkling of snow on it and the crowd of around 12,000 was bigger than that of the New Years Day match. Sunderland won the toss, took advantage of the wind and Devey kicked off for Villa. The game itself was a thriller, 4 v 4, with Villa taking the lead after quarter of an hour. Nip and tuck all the way it was generally agreed that a share of the spoils was a fair result.

The Annual Meeting

It was subsequently reported in the June 1898 edition of the Sporting Mirror that:

“The annual meeting of the Sunderland Football Club has been fixed for the 29th of this month. The officials have purchased the painting by Tom Henry (sic), representing the cup tie (sic) between Aston Villa and Sunderland in 1894 (sic) and also the artist’s supplementary proofs. Both the painting and the proofs they propose to put up as a prize drawing for the benefit of the funds of the club”.



On 11 July 1900 and Sunderland AFC’s annual meeting took place at the Grand Hotel, Bridge Street. The clubs chairman JP Henderson presided over an excellent turnout. The annual report showed an excess of expenditure over revenue of some £247. At the close of the meeting a discussion took place regarding the Hemy painting of the famous match against Aston Villa. It was explained that the painting had been raffled but as no-one had yet established a claim it it was being stored in a Sunderland furniture dealers establishment. The chairman thought that he might hand the painting to the Borough Art Gallery or perhaps the Town Hall. No decision was taken.

So what happened to the painting?

Intriguingly and only recently a postcard was located on e-bay of all places showing the painting hanging on the wall of a Sunderland pub called The Bells which was located at 14 Bridge Street, just up from The Wearmouth Bridge. It operated under the ownership of Jas. Henderson and Sons; the father of the club chairman. The Bells had an upstairs restaurant and in that upstairs restaurant the Hemy work was displayed for a period. It dominated the grill room.

So we know that from the furniture dealers it found its way to the Chairman’s Father’s pub.

The story can be further pieced together in that a picture emerged of the painting hanging on the wall above the reception area at Roker Park. Underneath was a plaque indicating that the Hemy Painting had been “Presented to Sunderland AFC by Samuel Wilson Esq., September 4 1930.”

Who was Samuel Wilson and how did he end up with it? Who knows but by a strange turn of events here it was back at Roker Park.

Then on Monday 15th September 1997, Sunderland revealed that the famous painting by Thomas M.M. Hemy which has been on loan to Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery since 1990 was returning home to the Sunderland Stadium of Light.

Latterly a runour emerged that the supplementary proofs referred to in the minutes of the 1900 Annual Meeting turned up at the SAFC Supporters Association. It was alleged that they were then bought by one of the Directors of the football club.



The Bells Hotel above and The Hotel’s Restaurant, Grill and Lounge with the painting clearly visible on the left hand upstairs wall.

Next: Thomas Marie Madawaska Hemy