



Hatters, Railwaymen and Knitters: Travels through England's Football Provinces

Daniel Gray

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English but estranged in Scotland, Daniel Gray is about to turn thirty. Like any sane person, his response is to travel to Crewe, Carlisle and Luton. *Hatters, Railwaymen and Knitters* is an attempt to seek out the England of today through the lens of its football clubs. Small teams and towns, Gray argues, made the country great and matter now more than ever. Taking twelve teams who had notable seasons in 1981, the year of his birth, *Hatters, Railwaymen and Knitters* is part-football book, part-travelogue and part-love letter to the bits of England that often get forgotten.

In Middlesbrough, his own childhood team, Gray examines the concept of supporter loyalty and identity. Is football all some of us have left to cling to in a land where the industry that bound the people of towns together has gone? In Watford he muses on the existence of a North-South divide. In Sheffield, a city of bitter derbies, he examines rivalries in football and what they say about our country. In traditionally-wealthy Ipswich he ponders the ownership of football clubs past, present and future. Via such places as Chester, Burnley, Bradford and Carlisle, this is a whistle-stop tour of the outer reaches of the football league that aims to answer big questions about Englishness.

For fans of Harry Pearson's *The Far Corner* or Stuart Maconie's *Pies and Prejudice*, this is a book that brings the real England vividly jumping off the page.

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