THE FALL GUY

An exercise: visit the sports section of Waterstones (it's a bookshop, ask your parents) and count the number of books about Sir Matt Busby and his time at Manchester United. There'll be dozens. Then see if you can find any about Wilf McGuinness. If you're lucky, you might find one. His autobiography. Following up a legend is usually a hiding to nothing, unless by a million-to-one chance you happen to be a legend yourself (which is why Manchester United is the canonical example and not Liverpool). Wilf McGuinness, though a good man, a talented player in his day, and a decent coach, was not a legend. And neither was Lord Reith's immediate successor, Frederick Wolff Ogilvie.

Ogilvie was born in 1893 in Valparaiso, Chile to a pair of London Scottish ex-pats. The family made their way back to Britain during his childhood in time for the young Frederick to attend Packwood Haugh Prep, followed by the progressive (for its time), science-focused Clifton College, and finally Balliol College, Oxford to study the famous *Literae humaniores* course*,* because an exhaustive study of Classics was all but mandatory for anyone of his social class at the time. Despite this, economics turned out to be his real strong point, and probably his next port of call had his studies not been interrupted.

He just had time to complete the first stage of his *Lit. Hum.* degree when World War One broke out. He signed up within two days to the 4th Bedfordshire Regiment and soon found himself in the vicinity of Ypres. The Battle of Hill 60 in early 1915 was long, bloody and got no-one anywhere, much like the war itself. Ogilvie was there. His left arm still is. This would seem to be a textbook example of a Blighty wound, but Ogilvie seemed to disagree. The Army certainly did, because he continued to serve (albeit somewhat further from the line) throughout the war, finally being demobbed on the great return in 1919 as a Captain.

He immediately returned to Balliol to finish off his degree, before hopping across to Trinity to take up a role as an economics lecturer. He became a fellow of Trinity a year later, and in 1926 was poached by the University of Edinburgh to effectively run their Management School of Economics. His specialty was the economics of tourism, something he was among the first to even contemplate. With the development of the motor car, holidays were becoming longer, and further from home, for lower income brackets, than ever before, and a whole new money-making industry was opening up. Ogilvie recognised the opportunities early, and eventually wrote a whole book on the subject, one of the first to point out that, in tourism in particular, spending money is a good way of making even more back.

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His reputation as a solid economic thinker grew throughout the thirties, and he was eventually employed as a special adviser on Youth Unemployment and Adult Education to the National Government. His final move before the BBC came knocking was to the University of Belfast, where he served as Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Political Economy. That was in 1935.

Four years later Reith left the Corporation he'd built, and the Board of Governors - after exhaling heavily - set about finding a replacement. How they settled on Ogilvie is uncertain, particularly given his complete lack of broadcasting experience - not that there was anywhere to get such experience *except* at the BBC (hiring an American was obviously completely out of the question), which was one reason Reith advocated a promotion from within, although no-one was listening to him. They were undoubtedly attracted to his solid financial credentials, however. It's even possible they considered his instinctive understanding of the new economic power that was tourism and thought, or hoped, that he could navigate the even newer one of broadcasting with similar, or even greater ease. Reith, of course, thought he was completely the wrong choice, but invited him to interview anyway in a symbolic gesture dreamed up by the Governors.

And so F. W. Ogilvie was appointed the second Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation, in the summer of 1938. Ideally for Ogilvie, he would have had a nice quiet transitional period to get his bearings in his new job, and perhaps decide on its future direction under his hand. Unfortunately, as mentioned, it was the summer of 1938. Shortly before his appointment Hitler annexed Austria; shortly after, he began the absorption of Czechoslovakia. Ogilvie had just been thrown in at the deep end.

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