

## **Beyond Altruism: British Football and Charity 1877-1914**

*Football charity matches and tournaments played a significant part in the development of the sport in Britain, overlapping the era of friendly games and the advent of competitive leagues. The football community prided itself on its contributions to charity, raising more money than any other sport before 1914, and stakeholders within the game – associations, clubs, players and patrons – gained considerable kudos for this perceived altruism. However, this paper will demonstrate that amounts donated, though welcome, were relatively minor sources of revenue for both institutions and individuals, and that the charity match became less important to clubs in a professional, and increasingly commercial, era.*

Ten minutes into the 1902 football international between Scotland and England at Ibrox Park, Glasgow, a wooden stand collapsed plunging spectators forty feet through the broken boards: twenty-six were killed and over 500 injured.<sup>1</sup> It was Britain's first football disaster. The city's Lord Provost set up a relief fund and the Scottish Football Association (SFA) immediately subscribed £3,000. The Football Association (FA) south of the border raised the same amount from donations, including the proceeds of a special England v. Scotland international.<sup>2</sup> Such generosity was neither unprecedented nor restricted to the 'football community.' In 1897 the FA had given £157, the entire takings from an international trial match, to the Indian Famine Relief Fund and two years later it subscribed 100 guineas for the benefit of those widowed, orphaned or wounded as a result of the Boer War.<sup>3</sup>

Disaster funds, however, were only part of the connection between philanthropy and football. In an age of limited state intervention, Victorian social welfare was founded on private charitable enterprise; orphanages, hospitals and convalescent homes all relied on regular voluntary subscriptions and donations, while economic depression and unemployment were alleviated by privately resourced soup kitchens and distress relief funds. The charity football match or tournament, via takings at the gate or collections in the ground, became part of this welfare system, allowing different groups with an interest in the game – players, spectators, organisers – to contribute either to a particular charitable institution or event, or to a range of worthwhile causes.

The following article will consider the relationship between football and charity from its beginnings in the 1870s to the outbreak of WW1. It will suggest that ‘stakeholders’ in the game derived significant secondary advantages from what appeared to be purely altruistic endeavours. It will also demonstrate that charity matches and tournaments not only benefited society but assisted the early development of the sport: by bridging the 15-20 year gap between the foundation of football associations and the advent of leagues, they played a significant, if neglected, part in the British association game. Finally, an assessment will be made as to whether the benefits to charity justified the self-congratulatory claims of the football sector.

### **Stakeholders**

Several groups had an interest in the football/charity relationship, not least the charitable institutions themselves who were concerned with obtaining funds for their activities.

Football associations authorised, and sometimes organised, charity matches; clubs and their players participated in the games; patrons provided trophies and lent status; and fans

paid to watch, thus funding the charities. This section looks at the various stakeholders and possible motives for their involvement.

### *Associations*

The pioneer in organising regular charity competitions was the SFA, founded in 1873. Three years later, confident not only of its prominence as a public institution but of ‘an increase in moral influence even more striking’, it arranged a match between two representative teams from Glasgow and Dumbartonshire clubs for the benefit of the Glasgow Western Infirmary. The game, in April 1876, raised £100.<sup>4</sup> A group of local merchants also organised a charity football contest around this time but by 1878 the two had merged into one competition, the Glasgow Charity Cup, run by a joint board of merchants and SFA officials. It was suggested by a contemporary sporting newspaper that this tournament acted as a catalyst for the wider development of charity matches, its fund-raising success having ‘the power of a magnet...so that [by 1880] a season without its charity games would present the same spectacle as a man without his nose.’<sup>5</sup>

Other leading associations followed the Glasgow Charity Cup example. When the Earl of Wharncliffe offered a cup in 1878 to the Sheffield Association (founded 1871) ‘to serve the interests of Sheffield footballers’ the proposal was for a competition in aid of medical charities, ‘the custom in favour at Glasgow.’<sup>6</sup> Similarly N.L. Jackson, a member of the FA Council, claimed that when he persuaded Sir Reginald Hanson, Lord Mayor of London and patron of the London Association (founded 1882), to present a charity trophy in 1886 for competition among the London clubs, it was ‘in imitation of Glasgow’ with hopes of ‘similar success.’<sup>7</sup> Of the other two major English associations, the Birmingham and District FA (founded 1875) started a charity competition in 1880 which became the

Mayor of Birmingham's Charity Cup in 1882. It is possible that it too was influenced by the Glasgow tournament given the annual inter-association fixtures between the two regions. The principle may also have extended to the Lancashire FA (founded 1878) where the major charity competition, the East Lancashire Charity Cup, was set up in 1882 by four constituent clubs, three of whom are known to have played in Glasgow.<sup>8</sup>

The same year saw the first involvement of the Football Association in charitable donations. When an FA Cup semi-final between Blackburn Rovers and Sheffield Wednesday produced a larger than expected gate, the Association allocated £70 to the charities of the two towns, the money to be distributed by the local mayors.<sup>9</sup> Three years later, on the recommendation of its Finance Committee, £25 or £50 donations, for distribution to local charities, were given to the towns in which Association matches had amassed the highest gate receipts.<sup>10</sup> From 1886-88 the FA became involved in annual charity football festivals at the Kennington Oval in London, featuring rugby as well as football matches, and in 1899 it set up its own benevolent fund. However, apart from these examples and occasional support for victims of major disasters such as the Indian famine and the Ibrox tragedy, the FA did not participate seriously in fund-raising until 1908 when its Charity Shield was established.

This competition stemmed from a major dispute with amateur clubs. In 1907 several of them refused to adopt an FA ruling that the associations to which they belonged must accept membership and responsibility for professional clubs in their area: instead they broke away to form the Amateur Football Association. The FA then stipulated that any team playing against one of the renegades would itself be thrown out. When the organisers of the Sheriff of London charity competition, begun in 1898, asked

if they were still free to choose the participants for their trophy irrespective of FA affiliation, they were told that this would be against FA policy. However, the FA Council was ‘most anxious that the cause of charity should not suffer, and would be pleased to arrange with the Committee for a match between two teams of this association, either club teams or selected teams.’<sup>11</sup> No more was heard from the Sheriff of London Committee until March 1908 when it asked, and was given permission, for a contest between the Glasgow amateur team, Queen’s Park, and a professional side. This never took place and the tournament lapsed. In the meantime the FA had decided to run its own annual competition, ‘the object being that charity should benefit by receiving the gross receipts of the matches.’<sup>12</sup> The current Football League champions, Manchester United, played their Southern League counterpart, Queen’s Park Rangers, in September 1908, and this became the customary format for the fixture. United became the first holders of the FA Charity Shield – winning a replay 4-0 – and a total of £1,275 was raised for charity.<sup>13</sup>

It was not only charities, however, that benefited from such matches. Football associations themselves may have been motivated by the prestige of hosting a big competition. SFA involvement in the Glasgow Charity Cup, for example, gave it an opportunity – only five years after its formation – to cement its position at the head of Scottish football. Already in charge of the nation’s challenge cup competition, it now held two major trophies under its auspices at a time when its overall control of the emerging sport was still tenuous. It might also be argued that charity fixtures increased the power of regional associations in the pre-professional era. The Lancashire FA ruled in 1878 that ‘any club competing for a prize offered by an individual or individuals unless

the net proceeds go to some football club or clubs or charity or charities, shall cease to be members of this Association.’<sup>14</sup> The threat of disaffiliation was used to consolidate its position as the football governing body in the region.

### *Charities*

No evidence has been found that charities themselves instigated football matches: they remained dependent on the suggestions of philanthropically-minded football associations, club committees or local dignitaries. Broadly speaking, charity matches fell into three categories. Probably the most common was for specific institutions, the ubiquitous ‘Hospital Cup’ match or tournament with funds dedicated to one particular establishment. The needs of the local infirmary or cottage hospital often provided the rationale for annual competitions, many of which were founded in the 1880s. Alongside these were more prestigious tournaments such as the Wharncliffe and Glasgow Charity Cups to benefit a range of local charities, including hospitals, asylums and homes for the most vulnerable groups in society – women and children, the old and the infirm.

Next, as already noted, matches were staged for disaster funds, the majority for shipping or mining accidents, or for the unemployed. In 1883 Dumbarton played Rangers to raise funds for the victims of the *Daphne* in whose hull almost 200 workers perished after it capsized on launch at its Glasgow shipyard.<sup>15</sup> In 1893 Everton played a match to raise money for the destitute families of cotton trade operatives thrown out of work, leading the *Athletic News* to comment that ‘it is pleasing to know that football can be devoted to charitable purposes’.<sup>16</sup> These were local initiatives but the response to many tragedies was on a nationwide scale. Although the Lancashire FA organised matches to help the families of those killed in the county’s major mining disasters at the

Altham (1883) and Maypole (1908) pits, the catastrophic explosion that killed 344 men at the Pretoria Pit near Bolton in 1910 also led to collections at Chelsea, West Ham and Leicester Fosse.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, some matches were arranged to support those within the sport. This category included games for injured players, benefits for loyal club servants such as groundsmen and, eventually, for a collective of individuals – the trade union. When, in 1888, the committee of the Glasgow Football Association noted that the treasurer of the Cowlairs club had been advised by his doctor to go abroad for reasons of ill-health but could not afford to do so, it helped arrange a match between two clubs from the Association to raise enough money to send him to Australia. Even earlier the premature death of the SFA secretary led his employers to organise a match between the holders of the SFA and FA cups to aid his widowed mother.<sup>18</sup>

Some charities were pro-active, sending requests for funds to football authorities but these were usually unsuccessful. The FA turned down an application from St Thomas's Hospital in 1895 on the grounds that 'it was not within the province of the Council to deal with such matters, the Council having declined all such applications before.'<sup>19</sup> The Glasgow Charity Cup Committee (GCCC) rejected the Royal Normal College and the local Cat and Dog Home in 1912. However, when Sister Aloysius of the St Vincent School for the Deaf, Glasgow, made an approach for funding in 1913, she was told that the matter would be considered: £5 was granted the following year.<sup>20</sup>

None of the Minute Books consulted give any other indication as to how or why deserving causes were chosen by committees. Presumably a consensus had to be reached although personal advocacy in favour of a specific project probably occurred: it is evident

that no Catholic charities were funded until a representative of Celtic FC joined the GCCC in 1894. Perhaps the most powerful voices also held sway in the selection of even more controversial recipients, such as the Lock Hospitals and Magdalene Asylums that dealt with ‘females who have strayed from the paths of virtue’.<sup>21</sup> In times of economic crisis or local tragedy, the choice of beneficiaries may have been more straightforward.

### *Clubs*

Although clubs often loaned out their grounds for one-off charity matches – between groups as diverse as boxers v. jockeys, sweeps against bakers or, more commonly, touring theatrical troupes and pantomime companies – they tended to see charity tournaments as an additional opportunity to play football.<sup>22</sup> In the 1870s and 1880s, prior to the development of leagues with regular match schedules, there was virtually a free market in fixtures. These were mainly friendly games which might be cast aside if one of the clubs progressed in a cup competition or obtained a better offer in terms of the quality of opposition or expenses promised. Charity matches with a trophy attached meant that clubs obtained meaningful fixtures, often with selected opponents rather than the random draw of cup competitions, something that was as true of the village club as of the elite team. Some contemporaries even suggested that an extra tournament would raise the standard of play in a local area.<sup>23</sup> A further advantage of charity competitions was their place in the football calendar - normally at the end of a season - giving clubs a chance to redeem a poor year by winning a cup, sometimes at the expense of a local rival.

It would appear that the initial spread of leagues and greater regularity of fixtures from the 1890s onwards had a limited impact on participation in charity tournaments, at least for those below the top flight, whereas friendly fixtures rapidly lost their appeal.



League titles, challenge cup wins, and charity cup trophies – in that order – maintained their attraction for the majority of teams throughout the period under review.

It could be argued that many clubs were motivated by a sense of what is now termed corporate social responsibility, seeing it as in their interest to foster good relations with relevant stakeholders: in the case of football teams, this included fans and the local community.<sup>24</sup> As Huggins has noted with regard to the early years of organised football in north-east England, ‘cups helped to lock soccer more firmly into the community.’ By arranging charity cup matches, clubs acted ‘in support of local enterprises, often hospitals, but increasingly also for the benefit of individuals, widows and orphans, or the relief of distress during depression.’<sup>25</sup>

However, little is known about actual donations by clubs to charity. The *Athletic News* in 1880 was ‘well aware that many clubs both in Lancashire and Yorkshire lay part of their earnings on the altar of charity’, but it is not clear whether this refers to actual donations or revenue from charity matches. Given the precarious state of early football finance, particularly for lesser amateur clubs – many of which went under – it may be that donating time, or perhaps a ground, for charity matches was an easier and more convenient way for clubs to give to charity.<sup>26</sup>

### *Players*

An editorial in a leading sports journal in 1880 argued that ‘our football players, if only they had the inclination, have the power to enrich many of our needy institutions.’ Some at least were so disposed and in the early 1880s the SFA gave public thanks to all the players who took part in the Glasgow Charity Cup ‘for the ready and cheerful way in which they responded to the appeal made to them.’<sup>27</sup> These of course were amateurs but,

as was pointed out by ‘an Old Player’ in 1902, it must not be forgotten that ‘professional players have throughout been prominent in contributing to deserving charities.’

Individuals such as Billy Meredith, later a stalwart of the Players’ Union, helped out fellow professionals by playing in their benefit games. Meredith was also involved in organising a match to aid the poor of Manchester and, in 1907, played for a celebrity XI at Stamford Bridge against Chelsea to raise money for charity.<sup>28</sup>

Collectively players helped each other via the benevolent fund of their unions. The first for professional footballers, the Association Footballers’ Union (AFU), set up a fund financed partly by contributions from players but also through other fund-raising activities. Amongst the earliest was a benefit match, English v. Scottish players, at Ibrox in April 1898, for which permission was obtained from both national associations. During the next two years several matches were played – with official sanction – for the benefit of individual players and their families.<sup>29</sup> The AFU’s successor, the Association Football Players’ Union (AFPU) was soon involved in arranging support for families of men who died leaving inadequate provision. Following the death of Frank Levich, the Union sent his mother £20 and wrote to his club, Sheffield United, asking that an amount equal to his wages be paid for the rest of the season. It also requested a grant from the FA Benevolent Fund. In 1908 the first Union AGM agreed to levy one shilling per member for the support of a fellow player’s nearest relative.<sup>30</sup> Although the AFPU made little headway in its challenges to wage limitation and the retain-and-transfer system, its everyday benevolent work was a ‘solid achievement.’ Between 1908 and 1914 hundreds of players and their families were assisted. Widows automatically received a £10 grant, raised by a

levy on all members, and other small but crucial sums were paid towards funeral expenses, removal costs, replacement of furniture and hospital fees.<sup>31</sup>

Altruism, however, was not the sole motivation for footballers. One group of players who took advantage of charity matches to earn money were the 'Zulus', formed in Sheffield in 1879, ostensibly to raise funds for the dependents of soldiers killed in the Zulu Wars. They soon began to charge fees for their appearances and in 1882 the Sheffield FA banned any player taking part in a Zulu match, or in any way receiving remuneration for playing, from all contests within its jurisdiction.<sup>32</sup>

Then there were the Corinthians, founded in 1882 by N.L. Jackson, Honorary Assistant Secretary of the FA. They featured in two of the first three London football festivals, played in all the Sheriff of London Shield matches except that of 1899 when the amateurs were represented by Queen's Park from Glasgow, and contested the Charity Shield in 1912. In the early 1890s they had offered to meet 'any other Association club at football, cricket and athletic sports, the proceeds to be given to charity.'<sup>33</sup> Jackson maintained that players in his scratch sides who played for charity paid all their own expenses but this issue is not as clear where the Corinthians were concerned.<sup>34</sup>

### *Patrons*

Patronage was dominated by peers, politicians and professional men. The fifth Earl of Rosebery, a future Liberal Prime Minister, sponsored a cup competition in the East of Scotland from 1882 to raise money for Edinburgh charities. In Burnley the local Medical Officer of Health, Dr Dean, donated a trophy in 1883 for a competition to benefit the local hospital. 'A number of leading merchants and gentlemen' subscribed for the Irish Football Association Charity Cup in 1885, nominating a board of trustees to invite clubs

and distribute match proceeds to charitable institutions.<sup>35</sup> Most significantly, 1898 saw Sir Thomas Dewar – then Lord Mayor of London – extend his football sponsorship from a local schoolboy contest to a match between the best English amateur and professional teams, the proceeds to be distributed to London charities after payment of match expenses and a sum to the professional club.<sup>36</sup>

Some patrons came from the world of commerce. The press were prominent in the establishment of the *Grimsby Mirror* Charity Association and the *Hull Times* Charity Cup. The Southern Combination Charity Cup (1900) was organised by J.M. Dick, editor of the *Football News*, ‘for and on behalf of southern charities’ and the cup itself was donated by the *London Evening News*.<sup>37</sup> Others who associated themselves with charity tournaments included the Bass brewing firm, the merchants who purchased the Glasgow Charity Cup and the donors of the Sunderland Shipowners’ Charity Cup.

Although these efforts are commendable they cannot be seen as entirely altruistic. If newspapers and businessmen had been totally disinterested in promoting themselves they could have donated cups anonymously. Instead their names became indelibly associated with the competitions they sponsored, providing a relatively cheap form of advertising; even when a cup cost over £100 it was a one-off payment that brought renewed publicity every year. Patronage of charity football kept the name of Members of Parliament in front of the electorate and, for mayors, produced a legacy of their term of office. The donor’s name continued to be associated with the event even when it was others who made the competition work.

*Fans*

Most of the major charity competitions began before the creation of English (1888) and Scottish (1890) elite leagues. Hence spectators who had not become used to the idea of regular, competitive fixtures between high quality teams were often willing to turn up in large numbers to watch additional games, contributing revenue for charities and bestowing status on participating clubs. There is no strong evidence that this spectator support for charity matches fell away when leagues were initially established. Barnsley had its highest attendance to date in the town's 1892 charity cup final; a Glasgow Charity Cup tie between Celtic and Rangers in 1897 produced a record week night crowd of over 23,000.<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately it was the fans that made charity football such an undoubted success. Their payments at the turnstiles funded the charitable donations and their coins filled the collecting cans. Many of those who paid to watch the games may have belonged to that half of working-class and artisan families who gave regularly to charity in the 1890s but, as well as helping others, they were also consumers purchasing the football product.<sup>39</sup> For their money they received entertainment, a reinforcement of social identity at a local level and the feel-good factor from helping others.

### **Continuity and change**

These, then, were the stakeholder groups that came together in the 1870s to promote football and philanthropy and, in some cases, their own image. Those involved in running football certainly boasted of the sport's charitable work. On the inauguration of the Glasgow Charity Cup, the SFA thought it 'a matter of great congratulation' that it was 'the first Association of the kind that has linked itself with important public and benevolent purposes.' By 1880/81, when 129 clubs were listed as members of the SFA, it

was announced that ‘there is not a club in “the Annual” that is not ready to play a “Charity Match” and far more has been given to the funds of charitable institutions by the actions of Association football clubs than all the other games put together.’<sup>40</sup> Four decades later, an ex-president of the Football League declared that ‘no sport subscribes more to charity than does football’ and at the outbreak of the First World War, the Chairman of the Football Association noted that ‘the support which the FA in the past has given to the relief of suffering gives good guarantee that it will not now fail in its duty’.<sup>41</sup>

But many aspects of the game had changed over this period. Although the charity match had been universally welcomed in the early days of organised football, the proliferation of tournaments had led to the development of a hierarchy amongst the competitions. Furthermore, the establishment of regular league fixtures forced clubs into rethinking their participation in charity events, and carefully selecting those to enter. Having won the Wharnccliffe Charity Cup for the fourth time in 1888, Sheffield Wednesday opted henceforth to enter its reserve team; by the 1890s the participating clubs in the East Lancashire Charity Cup often did likewise, probably because three of the four were founding members of the Football League.<sup>42</sup> In Birmingham it became increasingly difficult to get Football League clubs to play in the knockout stages of the Mayor’s Charity Cup and from 1906 it became a match between two invited teams. It was the same north of the border: the wholehearted support for charity matches, alluded to in the *SFA Annual* for 1880/81, could no longer be relied upon. Kilmarnock won its home town charity cup in 1886 but did not enter the other local tournament at Ayr, leading the Ayrshire Football Association to ‘hope that all clubs invited to take part in charity matches during the present season will be able to do so at once, and not in the

half-hearted way that is so detrimental to the interests at stake'.<sup>43</sup> Information gathered from *SFA Annuals* over a period of fifteen years suggests that there may have been a falling away of more minor charity competitions as early as the 1890s.

A further development in football that impacted on charity competitions was the authorisation of professionalism in England (1885) and Scotland (1893). All the competing clubs in the Glasgow Charity Cup – except for Queen's Park who remained staunchly amateur – immediately began to claim for players' wages. Initially the Charity Cup Committee insisted that it would only pay an allowance towards expenses but, by 1896, contributions towards wages were clearly acknowledged. Unless offset by larger gates such extra costs resulted in less surplus available for charity: in 1903 wages incurred during the Glasgow competition took 29% of the £840 gate.<sup>44</sup> By 1914 Alex Wylie, a long-standing trustee of the tournament, was complaining that players absorbed too much money from charity matches. This was in marked contrast to 1879 when a local councillor purchased gold medals for the winning team and was forcibly told that this would not be 'paid out of the funds collected for the unemployed'. In England, while the FA accepted Sir Thomas Dewar's proposal for a pro/am charity competition, it had no qualms about the principle that the professional teams should be rewarded for taking part, although they were restricted to £100 from gate receipts, plus expenses.<sup>45</sup>

The following sections will show that behind acts of charity lay power struggles, self-interest and greed. Particular attention will be paid to the league and professional era when the attitudes of clubs may have been affected by the increased commercialisation of the game.

### *Power relations*

The Football Association had cemented its authority over English football in the 1870s and was effectively in charge of the game by the 1880s. Determined to keep charity matches under its control, it passed regulations as to when they could be played, who could participate, and what should happen to the proceeds. No game was allowed – neither the final of a serious charity competition nor a burlesque involving pantomime artists – unless it was played under FA match rules. Normal disciplinary procedures were expected to be upheld and no charity was shown to Manchester United player E.J. West, refused a Charity Shield medal because he was under suspension at the time of the final. Ill-discipline was also used to fund charitable activities: after a pitch invasion at a cup-tie in 1904, Spurs was ordered to pay the FA £350 from the gate receipts which was then distributed to London charities.<sup>46</sup>

By the early 1890s every meeting of the FA Council or Consultative Committee was dealing with at least half-a-dozen applications for charity or benefit matches, so many that approval decisions were delegated to regional associations. The insistence that all charity matches must be officially sanctioned was even used to reproach executive member N.L. Jackson when he arranged scratch matches for charity without first obtaining permission.<sup>47</sup> This FA requirement also proved a major weapon in its confrontation with the Players' Union over the latter's non-benevolent activities. To meet the legal costs of a test case which challenged the retain-and-transfer system, the Union borrowed money from its benevolent fund. Consequently the FA refused to approve the Union's annual fund-raising match, thereby severely weakening its financial position.<sup>48</sup>



In a further example of FA control, English football's governing body refused for many years to allow clubs to charge entrance fees or hold collections for charity at pre-season practice matches, ostensibly to avoid undermining 'summer sports'. After this decision was rescinded in 1909 – perhaps indicating the increasing power of club football – some 50 teams took advantage of the situation to raise money for charity, suggesting that an opportunity had been missed earlier.<sup>49</sup> At the other end of the season the FA restricted matches to the pre-determined cut off date 'except under very special circumstances'. In Scotland the SFA had adopted a similar policy but decided that post-season matches to aid victims of the Ibrox disaster could be allowed 'under the exceptional circumstances'. When bad weather had led to a fixture backlog during the winter of 1894/95, it had done the same 'in the interests of the many institutions which depend so largely on football for a helping hand'.<sup>50</sup>

The Glasgow Charity Cup had become the site of several power struggles within a decade of its institution. Firstly a Rangers' spokesman asked the SFA in 1886 what steps could be taken to get the Cup under the control of the Glasgow Association: he was told that only members of the Charity Cup Committee – SFA and merchant representatives – could consider the matter.<sup>51</sup> The choice of teams to play in the tournament, always at the discretion of the organising committee, also became a contested issue. When SFA cup-winner Vale of Leven queried its non-selection in 1890 it was simply told that those chosen were 'the most suitable'.<sup>52</sup> The most serious battle, however, followed the establishment of the Scottish Football League (SFL). This body was already at odds with the SFA, which, in 1891, had set aside two Saturdays for international trial matches without reference to the League or the games fixed for those days. When the GCCC,

including its SFA representatives, then scheduled cup ties for several Saturdays before the end of the league season the SFL instructed its member clubs, Celtic, Rangers and Third Lanark, not to play in the competition. Without these leading teams, the Charity Cup, consisting of lesser clubs Airdrieonians, Partick Thistle and Northern, who played Queen's Park in the final, raised only £150. Moreover the League put the boot in even harder by organising its own charity competition which brought in £820. A lesson learned, the Committee gave way, switching its fixtures the following year to dates after the League season ended, but the SFA Annual General Meeting also ruled that all matches, including charities and friendlies, had to have official permission.<sup>53</sup> It was, as a Scottish newspaper noted, 'certainly not too creditable to the boasted generosity of footballers that we should have the prospect of yearly disputes over the details of the Charity competition.' Such altercations were not new, however. The early history of the tournament suggests that the merger between the SFA and Glasgow merchant sponsors took place as a result of similar difficulties, in this case club intransigence.<sup>54</sup>

Power struggles were not confined to national football associations: charity cup committees also became embroiled in controversial decisions. Those in charge of the Sheriff of London Shield decided not to invite Aston Villa to defend their trophy in 1902, although the club had once again topped the league. Instead, 'considering the interests of charity' – that is, London-based charity – they chose Tottenham, the FA Cup winners, to play the tie at their home ground against the Corinthians, and were 'rewarded by a very large attendance.'<sup>55</sup> In Scotland, the Southern Counties Football Association began the report on its charity tournament with the ominous statement, 'there must be considerable eliminations from the committee before harmonious working can be attained' with the

vice-president explaining that some members of the outgoing committee had ‘pretty much decided among themselves’ which teams were to play.<sup>56</sup>

Clubs, too, increasingly began to flex their muscles in the professional era, both against the authorities and each other. The GCCC had to concede neutral venues (1894), club alteration of match dates by mutual agreement (1897) and permission for SFA-cup tied players to play in Charity Cup matches (1902).<sup>57</sup> Petty politics meant that Everton refused to participate in an annual charitable fixture between professional footballers and pantomime artistes in support of local hospitals because it was to be held at Anfield, home of Liverpool, leading to the scathing query in the local press as to whether ‘Charity is to be ridden over for Jealousy’s sake.’<sup>58</sup> Political machinations also contrasted with the overt aims of charity elsewhere. In Dundee there were complaints that four established clubs – East End, Our Boys, Harp and Johnstone – had set up a Charity Football Association which deliberately excluded newer clubs like Strathmore and Lochee United to prevent them from improving.<sup>59</sup>

### *Greed and Self-interest*

There was often concern that insufficient charity match proceeds were applied to charitable purposes. In 1883 a Scottish newspaper criticised various charity match organisers for ‘allowing large numbers to sit down for tea’, sometimes as many as 70. They were reminded that ‘charity funds are not association funds’. Three years later there were press allegations of financial irregularity when the Victoria Hospital in Burnley received only £62 from gate receipts of £215 from the final of the Hospital Cup.<sup>60</sup> A tournament at Coalville was investigated by the Leicestershire FA as ‘the amount given to charity was very small and the expenses very high.’<sup>61</sup>

Eventually, at the end of the 1890s, the FA set up a commission to formulate rules for governing charity competitions and matches. These were formally adopted in April 1898, just prior to the annual surge in requests for end-of-season charity fixtures. In both league competitions and preliminary rounds of cups not less than 10% of the gross gate of each fixture – a pitiful amount! – had to be given to charity and the ground expenses specifically excluded the claims of the teams involved. At least one-third of gate receipts had to be donated in semi-finals and finals; one-off matches were to be dealt with on their merits, with the whole of the net gate going to charity after the deduction of reasonable expenses. No salary or honorarium was to be given to any official of any charity competition. It was stressed that these recommended levels of donation were a minimum and it was hoped that more would be given where possible.<sup>62</sup> Not all secretaries appear to have read the rules and in early 1899 the Apsley and District Charity Competition was told that net gate receipts of just £4:18s were ‘not sufficient justification for the existence of a competition described as a Football Charity Competition’. Further investigation revealed that less than £1 went to charity mainly because the two clubs involved, Burton Swifts and Luton Town had been guaranteed £40 to play.<sup>63</sup> A decade later, the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital Charity Cup Committee was informed that, as it had already expended £76 of the £194 raised, permission would not be granted for more to be spent on medals. It was reminded that ‘the money was raised in the name of charity’.<sup>64</sup>

In Scotland actual donations from the clubs to Glasgow Charity Cup funds were rare till the twentieth century. In 1899 Celtic rebated £15 from its match expenses though no other professional club followed suit till 1906. In 1909 the clubs agreed only to take expenses for games played on Saturdays (when attendances were larger) and by 1910

giving back at least 10% had become standard practice. Two years later the Secretary of the Charity Cup Committee wrote to all participating clubs requesting them 'to consider a reduction in your expenses for this season's competition'. Whether this embarrassed the clubs is a matter of conjecture but in 1914, when unfavourable weather affected the money raised, all the professional clubs reduced their charges.<sup>65</sup>

As commercial considerations came to the fore, the philanthropic ambitions of some clubs may have fallen away. Celtic is a prime example. Although founded in 1888 to support local Catholic charities, within a decade it had become a limited company, was declaring dividends of 10%, and had virtually ceased to make donations.<sup>66</sup> The decline in the club's charitable donations dates from 1893/4, the season in which professionalism was formally adopted in Scottish football.

Rather than supporting charity in the wider world, football turned increasingly to charity at home. In a physical contact sport with socially-sanctioned violence, injuries incurred in matches were sometimes serious enough to threaten the careers of professional players or to affect the amateur player's ability to follow his everyday job. Although some clubs – Aston Villa as early as 1879 – gave gratuities to injured amateurs and others took out insurance policies on behalf of their professionals, for much of the period to 1914 most distressed players relied on charity for assistance.<sup>67</sup> It was thus in the players' collective interest to participate in charity matches as some of the money raised was used to endow hospital beds and pay subscription lines from which they themselves might benefit. In 1913 the GCCC lambasted the Victoria Infirmary after two players had to wait several weeks for admission despite their injuries. The incident led to a letter

being sent to all three major Glasgow infirmaries asking ‘if you are prepared to facilitate the entrance of an injured football player to your institution’.<sup>68</sup>

Matches authorised to assist players who retired through ill health or severe injury were dependent on the goodwill of both the relevant clubs and football authorities. More certain help could come from benevolent funds set up specifically to assist distressed players and their families but players were not the only ones to benefit from in-house charity. The FA benevolent fund transferred money annually from its accounts ‘for distribution among necessitous players and *others who have rendered service to the game.*’<sup>69</sup> In 1907 the widow of Charles Alcock, long-serving FA secretary, received £100 from the fund and continued to get an annual £24.<sup>70</sup> Similar benefits were distributed in Scotland.

### **Charity Football – Who Benefited?**

The previous sections suggest that, as football developed from an entertaining pastime to a commercial pursuit, initial benevolence towards charity was tempered by issues of control and rivalry. The charity football match was still employed in the service of the local community and the public good but the burgeoning sport was too important for the principal stakeholders to sanction its unregulated growth. Furthermore, they soon recognised its business potential; from the 1890s the football cash cow was increasingly milked for commercial gain as well as contributing to charitable coffers. The level of expenses or financial guarantees to clubs to persuade them to take part in charity contests appears to indicate that the era of unconditional philanthropy was a thing of the past: yet authorities and patrons continued to congratulate themselves on football’s charitable

achievements. An attempt will be made in the following pages to quantify the financial benefits of charity football.

Although the FA subjected it to increasing scrutiny and regulation, the extent of charity football can only be estimated. Beyond a list of 275 FA-sanctioned charity competitions in 1913/14, all that can be quantified is the revenue generated by a few major charity competitions.<sup>71</sup> In the 1880s the East Lancashire Charity Cup generated an average of £170 for charity in the six seasons for which data is available; the first football festival of 1885/86 raised £405; the Wharncliffe Cup of 1880 produced £72; and the Glasgow Charity tournament averaged £752 a year in donations. The largesse of ‘Generous Glasgow’ continued through the 1890s with average donations of £999; these had increased to £1,540 by the First World War. The Sheriff of London Shield produced £300 a year from 1898/99 to 1907/08 and the Southern Combination Charity Cup averaged £242 a year in the nine seasons from 1901/02. After the novelty of the first match the FA Charity Shield gate receipts fell away markedly and the aggregate donation to charity in the next five seasons was only £14 more than was raised in its inaugural year, an average of £427 over the period.<sup>72</sup> Clearly the Glasgow Charity Cup stands out, thanks partly to the concentration of elite clubs within the Scottish conurbation which made many games local derbies.

The Glasgow Charity Cup figures can be put into a football perspective by comparing the gross receipts with those of the Scottish FA Cup final, and crowd sizes with average league attendances and, specifically, with the home gates of Rangers and Celtic, the two major crowd-drawing Scottish teams. These are shown in Table 1 and suggest that this charity tournament was a serious attraction to football fans. In contrast

attendances at Charity Shield matches fared less well in relation to Football League games. Average crowds at the Charity Shield were around 14,650 but for the two seasons for which data is readily available (1908/09 and 1913/14) the Football League was attracting 19,450 per match.<sup>73</sup> As shown in Table 2, the receipts generated fell far short of the FA Cup Final and were on a par with those of the Amateur Cup Final, a much less prestigious competition.

## **INSERT TABLES ONE AND TWO**

The aggregate amount football raised for charity is equally conjectural. Writing in 1912, J.J. Bentley maintained that in England ‘donations and subscriptions exceed £10,000 per year.’<sup>74</sup> How he obtained this estimate is unknown but it is implicit in Bentley’s article that it came from FA sources. Included in his figures were pre-season matches which brought in an average of £4,122 between 1909/10 and 1913/14.<sup>75</sup>

Even less clear is the extent to which this money benefited charity. Certainly the amounts collected for disaster funds represented a tiny fraction of the totals. When the British passenger liner Titanic struck an iceberg and sank on its maiden voyage in 1912, with the loss of 1,500 lives, the FA promised the gross receipts of the Charity Shield match and encouraged its affiliated clubs and associations to hold collections and arrange special matches. A total of £2,235 was raised but this amounted to less than 1% of the £250,000 donated to the Titanic Relief Fund.<sup>76</sup> Calculations based on donations from the Glasgow Charity Cup, the major British fundraising football tournament, and the annual incomes of several local charities – the Central Dispensary, the Glasgow Medical



Mission and the Samaritan Hospital for Women – also suggest that football contributed only 1-2% of total revenues.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, hospitals probably welcomed a regular source of income and the occasional sponsorship of a bed but in total the money coming from charity football did not make a substantial difference to their revenue streams. Donations from the Glasgow Charity Cup to the Victoria Infirmary averaged £100 per annum in the period 1892-96: total income from legacies, subscriptions and gifts was £35,000 in 1889.<sup>78</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Football probably raised more money for charity than any other sport but no charity – save for the benevolent funds of the football players and associations themselves – was dependent upon the game for more than a small proportion of its income. Indeed, as the Players' Union found when the FA banned its fundraising match, greater dependence could have been dangerous. Football provided regular, but relatively minor, revenue to some hospitals and homes, and one-off contributions, again relatively small, to victims of tragedies and economic depression. Yet this overt giving of assistance to the infirm and disadvantaged was sufficient to gain associations, clubs and patrons psychic income, often at little direct cost to themselves.

This manifestation of philanthropy often resulted in power struggles within associations and between clubs but over time, particularly after the legalisation of professionalism, the significance of the charity match within the football season declined. Initially charity fixtures could be viewed as a stage in the growth of football, overlapping the era of friendly games and the coming of competitive leagues. But by the twentieth century, and possibly earlier, clubs were less keen to play for charity in general. With the

development of the benevolent association and the football trade union, by 1914 charity could indeed have been said to begin at home.

## TABLES

**Table 1 Comparative Crowd Receipts and Match Attendances in Scottish Football**

Receipts (£s)			Average Match Attendance			
Period	Glasgow GC(a)	Scottish Cup Final(b)	Period	Glasgow CC(a)	SFL(c)	SFL Rangers Celtic(c)
1892/93-1898/99	1010	769	1892/93-1893/94	8168	3823	7078
1899/00-1906/07	1035	978	1905/06-1913/14	12615	6957	14814
1907/08-1913/14	1764	1701	1914/15-1917/18	14950	6096	13398

Source: (a) Minutes of Glasgow Charity Cup Committee  
 (b) Minutes of Scottish Football Association  
 (c) Ross, *Roar of the Crowd*

Note: Cup final figures omit replays

**Table 2 Comparative Crowd Receipts in English Football (£s)**

Season	Charity Shield	FA Cup Final	FA Amateur Cup Final
1908/09	1035 240 replay	3889	315
1909/10	226	4465 4149 replay	225
1910/11	354	4205 4478 replay	96
1911/12	230	3768 2612 replay	705 403 replay
1912/13	266	6134	177 235 replay
1913/14	391	4324	157

Source: Balance Sheets of FA.

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### Notes

1. Inglis, *Engineering Archie*, 19-25.
- <sup>2</sup>2. SFA Annual Reports, 1901/02; Minutes of FA Council, 18 April 1902, 8 August 1902.
3. Minutes of FA Council, 1 March 1897, 18 December 1899.
4. *SFA Annual 1876-77*, 26, 45.
5. *Athletic News*, 14 April 1880, 3.
6. *Athletic News*, 11 September 1878, 6; Sparling, *Romance*, 49.
7. Jackson, *Association Football*, 153.
8. Baron, *History*, 22.
9. FA Balance Sheet. 31 August 1886.
10. Green, *FA*, 66.
11. Minutes of FA Council, 4 November 1907.
12. Minutes of FA Council, 24 February, 9 March 1908.
13. In 1913 the match took place between a professional eleven and an amateur one. Details of the proceeds from the Charity Shield matches can be found in Table 2.
14. Sutcliffe and Hargreaves, *History*, 29.
15. Goldblatt, *The ball is round*, 70.
16. *Athletic News*, 6 February 1891, 1.
17. Sutcliffe and Hargreaves, *History*, 278; FA Consultative Committee 16 January 1911.
18. *SFA Annual 1887-88*, 73; *Athletic News*, 12 May 1880.
19. Minutes of FA Council, 12 July 1895.
20. MacDowall, 24 May 1912; 16 May 1913.
21. Checkland, *Philanthropy*, 237.
22. Curry, 'Football Spectatorship', 193; Huggins, *Victorians*, 138.
23. Mackie, *The Hearts*, 68.

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24. For an overview of CSR see Kakabadse, 'Corporate Social Responsibility', 9-45.
  25. Huggins, 'Spread of Association Football', 310-11.
  26. *Athletic News*, 14 April 1880, 4; Huggins, 'Spread of Association Football', 303.
  27. *Athletic News*, 14 April 1880, 4; *SFA Annual* 1882-83, 32.
  28. Old Player, 'Football', 77; Harding, *Football Wizard*, 44.
  29. Minutes of FA Emergency Committee, 4-27 January 1899; Harding, *For the Good*, 13, 15.
  30. Minutes of AFPU, 1 April 1908; 15 December 1908.
  31. Harding, *For the Good*, 108.
  32. Sparling, *Romance*, 45; Curry, 'Playing for Money', 345-46.
  33. Robinson, *History of Queen's Park*, 236.
  34. Creston, 'Football', 30; Jackson, *Sporting Days*, 174.
  35. Mackie, *The Hearts*, 68; Wiseman, *Up the Clarets*, 15; *SFA Annual* 1885-86, 108.
  36. Creek, *Corinthians*, 125.
  37. Minutes of FA Council, 28 February 1894; Minutes of FA Consultative Committee, 3 February 1897; Gamage's, 1914/15, 598-600.
  38. Firth, *Oakwell*, 10; *SFA Annual* 1898-99, 50.
  39. Prochaska, *Philanthropy*, 358.
  40. *SFA Annual* 1876-77, 27; *SFA Annual* 1880-81, 16.
  41. Bentley, *Football*, 390; Minutes of FA Consultative Committee, 31 August 1914.
  42. Sparling, *Romance*, 49; Baron, *History*, 73.
  43. Clives, *Centenary*, 45; *SFA Annual* 1886-87, 90.
  44. Cashbook, GCCC.
  45. Minutes of GCCC, 10 June 1914; Minutes of SFA, 3 June 1879; Minutes of FA Consultative Committee, 2 February 1898.
  46. Minutes of FA Consultative Committee, 20 November 1911; McGregor, 'Fiascos', 38-39.
  47. Minutes of FA Council, 14 December 1896; Jackson, *Sporting Days*, 174; X.Y., 'Football', 1897.
  48. Minutes of AFPU, 2 November 1909.

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49. Minutes of FA Council, 16 September 1890; Minutes of FA Emergency Committee, 11 June-19 August 1897; Minutes of Consultative Committee, 5 September 1910
  50. Minutes of FA Council, 10 July 1909; Minutes of GCCC, 17 April 1902; Annual Report of SFA, 1894-95, 6.
  51. Minutes of SFA, 9 March 1886.
  52. Minutes of SFA, 28 March 1890.
  53. Minutes of SFA, 24 March 1891, 2 April 1891; Robinson, *History of Queen's Park*, 181-2; *Scottish Sport*, 5 April 1892, 4.
  54. *Scottish Sport*, 22 April 1892, 3; Kay, 'The Archive'.
  55. Creek, *Corinthians*, 131.
  56. *SFA Annual* 1886-87, 101.
  57. Minutes of GCCC, 1 March 1894; 22 April 1897; 6 June 1902.
  58. (Liverpool) *Review*, 17 December 1892.
  59. *Scottish Sport*, 5 January 1892.
  60. *Scottish Sport*, 5 January 1892; Wiseman, *Clarets*, 22.
  61. Minutes of FA Emergency Committee, 7-14 September 1896.
  62. Minutes of FA Council, April 1898.
  63. Minutes of FA Emergency Committee, 4-27 January 1899, 9-24 February 1899.
  64. Minutes of FA Leagues Sanctions Committee, 30 July 1909.
  65. Minutes of GCCC, 26 May 1909; (Glasgow) *Evening Times*, 10 June 1914.
  66. Vamplew, *Pay Up*, 86.
  67. Carter, *Metatarsals*, 57; Taylor, *Leaguers*, 148-50.
  68. Minutes of GCCC, 29 May 1913; MacDowall, 12 March 1913.
  69. Green, *FA*, 167, our italics.
  70. Minutes of FA Benevolent Fund Committee, 6 July 1907.
  71. It is unclear how comprehensive the list is. There is no obvious gap as with that of 1906/07, the only other available, which cited no Lancashire tournaments although these undoubtedly existed.

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72. Figures obtained from data in; Baron, *History*; FA Balance Sheets; *Athletic News*, 22 September 1880; Minutes of GCCC; Gamage's 1910/11; Wilson, 'FA Charity Shield'. 'Generous Glasgow' was a well-known contemporary phrase (Checkland, *Philanthropy*, 312).

73. Minutes of FA; Vamplew, *Pay Up*, 63.

74. Bentley, 'Football', 390.

75. Calculated from data in Minutes of FA Benevolent Committee.

76. Bryceson, *Titanic*, 219.

77. Calculated from figures in Checkland, *Philanthropy*.

78. Slater and Dow, *Victoria Infirmary*, 21.

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