

The following two articles taken from the local press, detail the end of the first Macclesfield Football Club in 1897. The first article relates the decision to close down the football club and the second is the final liquidation meeting.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the shareholders of the Macclesfield Football and Athletic Company, Limited, was held on Friday at the large Sunday School in Roe-street, but there was only a small attendance, typical of the diminished interest which football affairs in Macclesfield have lately excited.

Councillor T. W. Sheldon presided, and among those present were Mr H. James (hon. secretary), Messrs F. Kershaw, S. W. Banks, Peter Wright, D. Bloor, G. Hall, H. Heath, Councillor Crowder, J. Barber, Rowbotham, R. S. Mellor, E. Skinner, J. Mobey, D. H. Hirst, and others.-

The Chairman expressed his regret that Mr Kershaw, J.P., was unable to be present, and went on to refer to the position of the company. He was sorry to say that they were not on very good ground, but he believed that they were all sportsmen enough to recognise that the directors had had a very uphill fight. Football in Macclesfield seemed to be going from bad to worse. He had been connected with football for 18 or 20 years, and he found that as far back as 1881 they carried a small balance of £5 in hand. From that time they had seen the club in prosperity, and in a reverse state, and at the present time unfortunately the latter was the case. –

Mr James read a letter from Mr Kershaw, J.P., written from Colwyn Bay, asking the directors to kindly leave off his name officially in the future, though he would continue to take the same interest in the club as formerly.-

Mr James then read the annual report, which contained the following:-

*“Thirty-one matches have been played, 8 won, 20 lost, and 3 drawn. The financial position is considered a little more favourable than it was twelve months ago; still it is far from what could be desired.*

*It will be noticed that a heavy fall has occurred in the receipts at gates, viz., from £450 12s 9d to £148 3s 2d, while subscribers’ cards show a decrease of £20 – a total falling off of £320 on the two items, as compared with the previous season.*

*The company has, however, been fortunate in receiving substantial help from special efforts, viz., £58 from the prize draw, and £18 8s 6d from the sports.*

*The thanks of the shareholders are also due to the players who so willingly gave their services for several months without payment.*

*An analysis of the expenditure cannot so easily be made. It includes over £50 of last year’s accounts. The players’ wages show £93 4s 6d, as compared with £379 14s 10d the previous year.*

*Of the £98 10s 8d owing last year £41 4s 1d still remains unpaid. It will be noticed that the calls in arrear amounts to £19 10s. Of this sum £11 may be considered as irrecoverable, through death and other causes; the remaining cases have been placed in the hands of a solicitor, with instructions to take proceedings of the recovery of the same.*

*The £17 10s owing to the old club has been abandoned by them, and will not in future be considered a liability.*

*The accounts still owing comprise:- Billposting and printing, £21 8s; office rent (two years), £5 2s; repairs to outfits, £3 3s 9d; repairs to ground, £9 4s 10d, sundries, £2 5s. The directors feel that the season has been a very trying one, and the difficulties have been many, but they have tried to keep the club in existence without incurring any further liability.”-*

Mr Rowbotham inquired why the directors had not taken upon themselves to pay the £3 odd claimed by the band for services on the last occasion that Macclesfield won the Cheshire Cup. He described the repudiation of the amount for which the late secretary (Mr J. E. Smith) was sued individually in the County Court, and on a technical point compelled to pay, as a shabby action, in the opinion of many people, and expressed the conviction that it had done the company a deal of harm.-

The Chairman believed this repudiation of the bill was a matter which occurred during the office of a former directorate, so that the present directorate had really nothing to do with it. He (the chairman) had, however, been informed that in engaging the band Mr Smith was not following out the wishes of his directors, who seeing that there were no funds advised him not to incur the expense. At any rate, the bill should have been dealt with last year, and he thought they could not discuss it here.-

Mr Rowbotham: I think the bill was presented this year.-

Mr James said the bill was presented last year, in the reign of the old directorate, who ordered the bill out, and it was not acknowledged by the auditor, nor included in the list of liabilities, so that if the present directors were to have paid it now would have been to have cast a slur upon their predecessors.-

Mr Rowbotham did not see it in that light. It appeared to him that the directors had willingly accepted the services of the band, and then refused to pay for them. It was a penny wise and pound fo[o]lish policy, and the directors had been dubbed shabby for not paying it.-

Mr Wright was sorry this matter should have been brought up now, especially during Mr Smith's serious illness, but it appeared that some explanation was necessary. Mr Smith had, it appeared, stated that he (Mr Wright) gave the order for the band, which was not the case. He (Mr Wright) certainly did consent to it, but it was only on condition that Mr Smith went round with the hat, and got the money that way. At the previous players' meeting, when the arrangements for the cup tie were made, the matter was fully discussed, and it was decided that a band should not be engaged, for apart from the lack of funds, to beat Crewe Alexandra with the team which Macclesfield had then was not much of an honour.-

Mr Rowbotham: The players' committee took too much upon themselves, it seems to me. They had no right to engage or not engage a band.-

Mr Wright said the players' committee made the arrangements for the cup tie, and had a right to say whether a band should be engaged or not. The charge mentioned at the time was only 30s, and when the bill came in the directors considered it not only an irregular but an exorbitant charge. He

(Mr Wright) personally regretted that the bill should have been taken into court, and would rather that the club had paid it, but there were other reasons for not doing so besides those referred to.-

Mr Rowbotham, after this explanation, announced that he had decided to “ go round with the hat “ himself, in order to refund the money to Mr Smith, and he had already had a sovereign promised.-

The Chairman expressed his pleasure at this proposal, and said he would be glad to contribute his mite, and was sure there were other gentlemen who would do the same.-

The report was passed without remark.

The future of the company was then discussed.-

The Chairman said it was evident that football was at an exceedingly low ebb in Macclesfield, and he personally had concluded that it was time it had a rest. He had had some conversation with the directors, who did not wish to put their ideas before the opinion of the shareholders, but he did not think he would be betraying them if he said that they felt, individually and collectively, that they could not continue to serve as directors of this company. Football was not gone into in Macclesfield with the zest and energy of former times, when footballers fought for the love and honour of the game alone; therefore the advice of the directors was that the company should be amicably wound up. It would require a sum of £60 or £80 to commence another year with, for as had been shown, the company was in debt to the extent of some £40. There was sufficient in the shape of material, property, and the assets, together with the sum which the completed call of £1 per share would make, to make it possible to get out all right, and return a little to shareholders, but any other course threatened utter failure.-

Mr J. Mobey expressed the opinion that there were various reasons other than those mentioned for the decrease of the public interest. One reason, he believed, was the large number of small clubs in and about the town. As a shareholder, he was very sorry to see they were compelled to wind up the company, but they could not go on losing £5; he for one at any rate did not feel inclined to do it.-

Mr Peter Wright went into a very explicit and conclusive statement of figures showing the marked disparity between the gate money of late matches compared with those of former years when the club was run at practically no expense. Of course it was yet possible for a local team to be started if one could be found to hold its own, but he doubted whether sufficient local players could be found to do that. The directors had had very little encouragement from the public, but if a club was started by a few popular players such as Bolton and Ernest Reddish, more popularity might be gained, and the fixtures which were now being made by the Combination for Macclesfield might be fulfilled.-

In answer to Mr Rowbotham, Mr Wright said the players had been paid nothing since January, and the linesmen were paid nothing last season.-

After further discussion, chiefly relating to what arrangements shall be made with the Combination, on the proposition of Mr Rowbotham, seconded by Mr Mobey, and supported by Mr Skinner – who said he really believed a rest of twelve months would do the game of football good in Macclesfield – it was unanimously decided that the company should be wound up.-

Mr James was appointed liquidator, and Messrs Frank Kershaw, Wright, Binks, and Bloor were appointed a committee of inspection.-

Votes of thanks to the hon. secretary, of whom Mr Kershaw wrote in the highest praise, concluded the meeting.

## **FINAL MEETING**

A general meeting of members of the Macclesfield Football and Athletic Company, Limited, was held in the large Sunday School on Friday, to receive the liquidator's report, showing how the winding-up of the Company had been conducted, and its property disposed of.

Mr J. Kershaw presided, and amongst those present were Messrs Harry James (the liquidator), D. R. Bloor, Peter Wright, Frank Kershaw, John Barber, F. Gallimore, George Sharpley, G. Hall, H. Corbishley, and others.

The Chairman stated that some time ago an inspection committee was appointed to see to the winding up of the company, and the meeting had been called to receive their report. He must say they had had a very arduous task, and also an unpleasant one. They had not shirked their responsibilities, however, and he thought the meeting might compliment them on having achieved such a satisfactory result. He would ask the liquidator to read the committee's report.

Mr James stated that the resolution for a voluntary winding up was passed at an extraordinary meeting of shareholders, held on the 19th July 1897, at which he was appointed liquidator, together with an inspection committee consisting of Messrs F. Kershaw, P. Wright, S. Binks, and D. R. Bloor, Mr Frank Kershaw subsequently being appointed chairman. The work of realising the assets was commenced immediately, with the result shown on the balance sheet, viz. £19 10s being received for the stand, and the whole of the other properties sold to the Hallefield Club for £14 12s 6d. Efforts were made to recover the amount of unpaid calls, £19 10s, but only £13 10s resulted therefrom, the balance of £6 being irrecoverable. A call of 4s per share was made on the 9th November, which providing all had paid, would have realised £49; whereas only £44 16s was received. The payments were all liabilities incurred prior to the winding up, down to the amount "returned to shareholders."

The other items in the balance sheet were liabilities incurred in the winding up, viz., advertising £3 12s, postages and cab 33s, unrecovered court fees 7s, solicitor's charges £12 3s 1d, printing reports, making out returns, etc., £1 12s 10d; liquidators' charges, £21 3s. Regret was expressed that the winding up should have been so prolonged, but the necessity of having to proceed against defaulters through the court had caused the delay. Ten meetings of the Inspection Committee had been held.

On the motion of Mr. Sharpley, seconded by Mr. Gallimore, the report was approved and adopted. A formal resolution was also passed with regard to the disposal of the books, accounts, and other documents of the company. The Chairman said this was the first liability company he had had to do with. He was never very much enamoured, of limited companies, but no doubt many thought the formation of the Macclesfield Football and Athletic Company would be a success, and the idea was enthusiastically taken up, but for reasons which he had given before the thing did not prove a success. He believed, however, there was a bright future for football in Macclesfield. Hallefield seemed to have taken a fresh lease of life, and he wished it all the success possible. He believed there were as clever lads in Macclesfield as in Stockport, Crewe, or any other part of Cheshire, and that Macclesfield would again occupy a prominent position in the football world. He was, of course, very sorry that the old club had come to such a termination, but could only repeat that he was in no way surprised at the result. He doubted the success of the company project at the first, but at the request of

many old subscribers, and also, for the love of the game, he agreed to throw in his lot with them. In concluding, the Chairman spoke in eulogistic terms of the services rendered by Mr. James as liquidator, and also of the good work done by the Inspection Committee, and moved a vote of thanks to them. Mr. Sharpley seconded.

Mr. James, in acknowledging the compliment, remarked that the committee had incurred no further liabilities, and had also been able to pay 20s in the pound. (Hear, hear.) He proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman, and said everybody knew the interest he took in football, and that it would have been dead long ago in Macclesfield but for his support, financially and otherwise.

Mr. Wright seconded the proposition, which was heartily carried.

The Chairman briefly replied, and the meeting terminated.