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The Origins of Flag Days

It is often forgotten that during the Victorian and Edwardian period charity finance was big business. In 1913 the total income of the 2112 voluntary charities of which particulars were given in *Burdett's Hospitals and Charities* amounted to £13,559,016. Included in these figures were the large hospitals, orphanages, institutions for the disabled and missions. Sir Henry Burdett's annual digest excludes most local and welfare charities. The total sum must have been in the region of £20 million, worth perhaps £1 billion today.

By the outbreak of the First World War, virtually all the techniques for extracting money from potential donors had been invented. Direct mail, an important part of modern charity fundraising, was well developed, with mailing lists of donors and potential donors. The Liverpool Central Relief Society, for example, wrote annually to the 15,000 residents of the city paying more than £150 in rates, asking for donations to the charities which it represented.¹

At the beginning of October 1914 Princess Mary, youngest daughter of George V, set up a charity to send Christmas boxes of cigarettes and chocolate to every serviceman. All in all, £162,000 was collected and gifts were sent to some 425,000 men. The charity's organiser, Hedley Le Bas, was able to report that, by 27 October 1914, over 39,200 appeals had gone out by post. Apart from those sent to private individuals, he also sent out 7000 specifically directed at 'those who kept more [than] five servants', 1500 to social clubs, 1600 to schools and 2600 to Masonic lodges.²

The problem, then as now, was that the response rate was always likely to be low. An 1873 survey of the richer classes of Liverpool showed that out of a possible 20,000 contributors to charities, just under 7000 actually made any contribution, and of these 1200 provided half the total.³

Purse strings could, however, be loosened when a particular disaster or war made an impact – as indeed still happens. An extra £5 million, for example, was given during the Boer War for the relief of soldiers and their families. Regular contributions to hospitals, orphanages and local charities were hardly affected.

Another major source of income for charities was endowments made by individuals. In 1912, the Charity Commission estimated, some 227 wills contained significant charitable bequests amounting to just over £2 million.⁴ The main beneficiaries were the medical charities and those charities run by the Church of England. The problem, of course, for charity managers was that

bequests were something of a lottery: one could never predict when they would arrive, or their worth. And most smaller or local charities rarely received legacies.

By the end of the nineteenth century most charities were of the subscriber or voluntary type: that is, they were run by an executive committee elected, or more often self-appointed, by the subscribers. These charities were usually set up to meet a specific need, such as looking after destitute children or sick animals, by a group of concerned individuals who would subscribe money to the purpose. Lists of subscribers were regularly published in newspapers or in annual reports. There was the additional incentive that a subscription of a certain amount might allow nomination of a person to a vacancy in an orphanage or hospital bed or the issue of a ticket or letter entitling the holder to medical attention. These nominations were open to abuse and were discouraged by charity reformers from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, although they remained common in dispensaries and hospitals. Even as late as 1916, the Star and Garter Home in Richmond, perhaps the greatest of the new charities of the First World War, offered the chance to nominate patients to people who subscribed £500 or more.

Subscriptions were another fickle source of income. A downturn in the economy, or worse, a scandal within a charity, could see the dramatic falling away of support. Charity managers believed, perhaps wrongly, that the number of potential subscribers was finite. William Grisewood, for example, who undertook a survey of Liverpool charities in 1898, argued that 'as we increase the number of charities we find the number of principal supporters about the same'. All in all, he found that just under a quarter of the income of charities in the city came from subscribers.⁵

In fact, there seems to be some evidence that the subscriber base was actually decreasing. Subscriptions were to fall away rapidly during the First World War and the inter-war period. They were increasingly regarded as old-fashioned, reminiscent of an older paternalistic world of Lady Bountifuls and deserving poor.

During the Edwardian period, charities seemed curiously absent from the streets. Street collections had been an integral part of fundraising for soldiers and their families in the Boer War. Rudyard Kipling touched contemporary hearts with an outrageously sentimental ballad called the 'Absent Minded Beggar'. The opening stanza went:

When you've shouted 'Rule Britannia' – when you've sung 'God save the Queen'
–

When you've finished killing Kruger with your mouth –

Will you kindly drop a shilling in my little tambourine

For a gentleman in khaki ordered South?

Certainly, charity collectors were still sometimes to be found on street corners, but on the whole it was only the less reputable charities and individuals who resorted to shaking collecting boxes in front of passers-by. The Charity Organisation Society passed a resolution in February 1914 complaining that 'the present practice of collecting for charities in the streets and public places offers

every opportunity for fraud and tends to bring discredit upon the cause of charity'.⁶

The Metropolitan Police prosecuted a number of collectors between 1912 and 1914 for making menacing approaches to passers-by or obstructing their passage. These women – for they were all women – seem to have been only one step removed from beggars. Indeed, several were charged with begging under the Vagrancy Acts.

Mary Blanchard and Maud Stoneham, aged 36 and 24 respectively, were charged with 'wilful obstruction by rattling collecting boxes for the Thames Christian and Temperance Mission in the faces of pedestrians'.

Collectors were often spurred on by the fact that they got a share of the collection – in the case of Stoneham and Blanchard 20 per cent. For some, it must have been their sole means of support: as one collector, Martha Garner aged 50, said when arrested on Oxford Street, 'I must do something for my living.' She took a third of anything she collected for the Poor Children's Society.

Perhaps the most famous of the collectors was a Miss Tyler, who collected for an Institution for Lost and Starving Cats in Camden Town. Her pitch was outside the Swan and Edgar department store in Piccadilly and she had mounted a collecting box on the front legs of a stuffed cat. She made 16/- to 18/- a week from her box, and when cautioned by the police, complained bitterly, 'If you move me on, my living is gone. There are so few places where one can get money given to us.' Eighteen shillings a week would have been just about enough to live on.⁷

Incidentally, there is a fascinating treatise to be written on animals in charities. Many railway stations had a dog with a box who collected pennies or other sums for local charities. Drum was one such dog, based at Wembley station. During 1915 he collected over £50 for Red Cross funds with the slogan 'He will bark and shake paws with peer or commoner for pound or penny'. A stuffed and mounted, if rather moth-eaten, collecting dog can still be seen on the platform at Slough station.

The Metropolitan Police had taken powers to control street collecting in 1903 – ahead of any other police authority. They were concerned not so much with the ethics of collecting, but with public order and ensuring the smooth flow of traffic. Socialists and trade unionists were badly hit by the new regulations, as much of the funding left-wing groups received apparently came from collections at street corners and open-air meetings. The Home Office files on the subject contain eloquent complaints from the Social Democratic Federation about restrictions on collecting at meetings in Trafalgar Square, and from George Lansbury about the prosecution of the London Clarion Van in his East End constituency.⁸

Outside London, the police had no such powers, although many people thought that they did. Occasionally, the police could take the law into their own hands. In Blackpool, which with its large tourist trade was a particular haunt of street collectors, the Chief Constable, W.J. Pringle, insisted that collectors received permits from the town's Watch Committee. The police, he told the Home Office, came down 'fierce' on people without permits. The fact that the Watch Committee met only monthly was a disincentive, as many organisers could not

wait that long. Pringle cites the example of a strike of workmen in Accrington

*an application is received by telephone from some person representing himself to be deputed by the men on strike to state that it is proposed to send a band and collection to parade the Blackpool streets on the following day to collect money behalf of the strike funds.*⁹

Collections continued to be made on the streets for the Hospital Saturday and Sunday Funds. Hospital Saturday and Sunday collections were designed to allow the whole community to show their support for local voluntary hospitals. They originated in collections made on a specific Sunday of the year in all the local churches, but the idea – driven by the need for money – soon leapt out of the pulpit into the street. The professed aim was to give the working classes an opportunity to contribute to the hospitals from which they received so much benefit. Considerable sums could be raised through these collections. In 1900 the two largest collections per head of population were in Wolverhampton and Sunderland, which raised £4468 and £6596 respectively, or about 3p per person.¹⁰

These collections in particular involved many friendly societies and social clubs. Originally they took the form of street processions in which floats would parade around the town while collectors solicited contributions from onlookers. In Reading by the mid-1890s this proved less than popular. In 1896, after some deliberation, the organisers started a house to house collection in addition to the traditional procession. Stephen Yeo argues that this was symptomatic of a greater focus on the home as a centre of social life – something that would profoundly affect British life in the twentieth century. By 1901 the majority of funds came from house to house collections, and the once colourful processions slowly faded away. This pattern is likely to have been repeated elsewhere.¹¹

Who thought of the idea of flag days, or flower days as they were initially known, is unknown, as is when and where they were introduced. It is possible that they grew out of tokens given on Hospital Saturdays. But it is clear that this was an idea whose time had come. Organising respectable young ladies to sell representations of flowers on the streets in aid of a reputable charity was a master stroke.¹²

The first such flag day I have been able to trace is the Alexandra Rose Day held on 26 June 1912, although the reports in *The Times* hint that it was not totally new. It was held to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival in Britain of Princess Alexandra of Denmark to marry Edward, Prince of Wales and later Edward VII. Queen Alexandra, in common with most members of the royal family, had a long-standing interest in charities, particularly with regard to nursing and hospitals. According to Frank Prochaska, however, 'Capricious and feather-headed [Queen Alexandra] pursued charity to the point of recklessness.'¹³

The day was to be 'a royal fete organised by the ladies of Great Britain in honour of Queen Alexandra.' It took place only in London, however. The plan was to station girls – 10,000 of them, dressed in white and red, the national colours of Denmark, with a red-edged sash bearing the name Alexandra and a white hat adorned with roses – throughout the metropolis. Each girl was issued with a cylindrical collecting box and a basket of artificial roses which she would, in the words of *The Times*, issue as a receipt for a donation. The cripples and blind men of Mr Green's Institution made some 10 million artificial roses. It was

a simple plan and one which worked staggeringly well.¹⁴

The Times wrote that 'the most noticeable sight was the enormous number of men who wore [a rose]. In the City and West End, at any rate, nearly every second man had at least one bloom and often had two or three in one buttonhole.' And it also noted the decorum of the transactions, which of course contrasted with the traditional view of street collections: 'The ladies as a rule refrained from pressing their roses on passers by, but a gentle or even silent appeal was enough.'

Collectors were often of noble birth. In the City, *The Times* recorded that:

for the first time in history ladies were permitted to enter the Baltic Exchange during business hours. Lady Michelham, Lady Alexander, and Miss Phyllis Broughton and other flower sellers were admitted and rapidly of their wares.

Further west, Mrs Asquith, the wife of the Prime Minister, and Mrs Lloyd George, wife of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, sold flowers in Westminster.

In financial terms, however, the day was not a great success. Some £17,232 was raised, less than half as much as the Hospital Saturday Fund in the metropolis. The expenses were high: the flowers alone cost over £3000 – some 18 per cent of the total receipts. Well-run charities of the period were expected to have expenses of 5 per cent or less. The organisers shrugged this off, commenting that:

In other cities where the experiment of a flower day has been tried, its introduction has been attended with great difficulties in the first year of working. In subsequent years, however, such festivals invariably produce results twice or three times as large.

Sadly, however, this prediction was not borne out. The 1913 collection in London amounted to £24,609 and that for 1914 to £22,000. Again, expenses remained high.¹⁵ The proceeds were split between hundreds of hospitals, institutions and orphanages, mainly in London and the south-east, such as the British Hospital and Home for Incurables, Streatham, the Ventnor Home for Consumptives and the 'Marie Celeste' Samaritans Society at the London Hospital: each received £50 or £100.

The favourable publicity quickly attracted the attention of charity organisers. A year later, Alexandra Rose days were held in many provincial centres, and this must have provided a useful example for local charity managers to copy. Within eighteen months of the initial Alexandra Rose day, it was a good enough excuse for the bricklayers' union to use when collecting for locked-out colleagues in London. The organiser told the police, 'We are not collecting, we are selling something for money, and have as good a right to sell tickets as others have to sell Queen Alexandra's flowers.' The police's attempt to prosecute the bricklayers for habitual begging under the 1824 Vagrancy Act was dismissed. It was this new element, this 'ticket' – a worthless piece of paper – or flower, that made the difference.¹⁶

Why should the idea have spread so quickly? The answer may be that flag days proved very popular with the public. For the first time, donors were given something in return for their donation which they could wear to show their support. Contributions were secret and were all rewarded in exactly the same

way, so it mattered not whether a supporter had given a penny or a pound. Almost for the first time charities had come up with a fundraising scheme which appealed to all sections of society, not just the upper and middle classes. Donations as a result soared. In Birmingham a contemporary wrote:

As to the efficacy of the method, it may be mentioned that in regard to a particular institution a street collection in 1914, before the handing of tokens to contributors was introduced, realised £500, but a flag day in 1917 for the same purpose provided over £1600.¹⁷

Flag days soon became a tangible sign of people's support for this good cause or that. This was especially true during the First World War. An easy way to show your patriotism was to buy and wear a flag or even to volunteer to sell flags. As Charles Ogden, the historian of the war effort in Bradford, wrote in 1916:

It is indeed, an inspiration of genius by which was established in our community the habit of purchasing, which ever organisation authority ordained it should be so, a little paper flag at any price dictated by the beguiling of fair collectors or the prompting of one's conscience and sympathy – an extraordinary illustration of the power of a trifling symbol to stimulate enthusiasm . . . in the phlegmatic masses of the population.¹⁸

These 'phlegmatic masses' became an important element in the calculations of the organisers. At the outbreak of war about two-thirds of the British population could be classed as working class, many of whom had experienced an unprecedented, if sometimes inconsistent, prosperity over the previous few decades. It is difficult to assess how much working-class men and women contributed to charity. Philanthropists liked to stress proletarian contributions, as it gave the impression of the inclusive nature of their appeal and reinforced their argument that the better sorts of working-class people were buying into voluntarism and self-help.

When the poor gave, it naturally tended to be directed at helping people like themselves, such as soldiers during a war, or the survivors of a pit disaster. Voluntary hospitals and dispensaries found it much more difficult. Working-class support here often came through friendly societies or co-operatives who, in return for their contributions, received tickets and other rights of admission for members.

It was thus in the nature of things that flag day collectors were often sent to the poorer as well as the wealthier districts. In June 1914 the organisers of the Alexandra Rose Day in Liverpool reported that 'In a working class district . . . over £95 was received of which £90 was entirely copper.'¹⁹

It is certainly a self-perpetuating myth that pound for pound the poor were more generous than the rich. The organisers of the first Alexandra Rose Day in London noted that 'the comparatively poorer districts have yielded better results than the wealthier parts of the city'. This claim is, however, mere rhetoric. It does not seem to be borne out in the published accounts, which show that 45 per cent of the total was contributed in the three most prosperous areas of London: the City, Westminster and Marylebone.²⁰

With the outbreak of war, the flag day came into its own. The first ones seem to have been held on Saturday 5 September, a month after the declaration of

war on 4 August 1914. They were held independently in Bristol, where £1000 was raised for the local Red Cross branch, and Glasgow, where the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association collected £4000. The Scottish day was organised by Mrs Agnes Morrison, wife of the Lord Provost. She was to gain a reputation, boosted by an amount of self-publicity, for the amount she raised for charities by organising flag days.²¹

The first flag days seemed to have been held for the 162,000 Belgian refugees who were flooding into Britain as the Germans moved through Belgium. The arrival of these refugees offered the first real chance for ordinary men and women who were not able to enlist to become involved in the war effort. As Peter Cahalan, the historian of the Belgian refugees, wrote:

*most people in the movement were motivated at first not by an overwhelming compassion for the refugees – though of course, pity played its part – but by a simple desire to do, to be involved in the war effort.*²²

And part of this doing was helping with flag days for the Belgian Relief Committee, the War Refugees Committee and the myriad other bodies. This set a pattern. Many of the flag days subsequently organised were for charities that sought to help the victims of the war, particularly in France, Serbia and Russia. This may have been because these new charities were unable to tap into the resources – legacies, subscriptions and the like – that traditional charities had at their disposal. These flag days also served the useful purpose of reminding the British of the sufferings endured by the populations of allied nations in the cause of the war.

Within months of the beginning of the war, a clear pattern emerged of regular flag days and of the organisation it took to run them. The Serbian Relief Fund, for example, contacted mayoresses in the spring of 1915 asking them to organise a flag day in their town in aid of the Fund. The Fund tried to make matters as easy as possible by providing free of charge flags, collection boxes, trays and literature.²³

Artificial flowers were soon replaced by flags, which were easier to make and much cheaper. These flags came in a bewildering range of colours and shapes. As the war progressed, in order to stand out in the crowd, charities had to think of more imaginative items to sell, ranging from lamps, sold by ladies dressed as Crimean war nurses in aid of the Star and Garter Home, to miniature tanks in support of comforts for the men of the Tank Regiment

The amounts collected by flag days could be impressive, but naturally some appeals proved more popular than others. The most popular appeal over the four-year period of the war was the 'Our Day' appeal launched by the Red Cross, which raised some £3.2 million largely in 1917 and 1918. Other popular causes were, naturally, anything to do with soldiers' welfare and British prisoners of war. The most popular flag days in Birmingham between November 1915 and November 1917 were for the Blinded Heroes Fund (£2225) and the Red Cross (£1769).²⁴

Refugees and foreign relief funds also proved popular. By 1916, each ally had its own day on the national anniversary – for example, the French had theirs on Bastille Day – and the monies collected was shared between the appropriate organisations. At the bottom of the pecking order were charities which sought to help civilians in distress, possibly because donors felt that there were official

bodies to which they could turn.

Although flag days proved popular with both the public and the charities themselves, critics soon emerged. Moralists were worried about having young women and children collecting money. And some charity managers were concerned with the fact that, in the excitement of it all, money might be given to unsuitable or downright crooked institutions. In fact, there is little evidence that flag days were either corrupt or corrupted the collectors.

The moralists were particularly concerned with the effect that street collections would have on children, and particularly young girls, from respectable backgrounds. It was almost as if mixing with the working classes would lead to moral blackmail. Others felt that having middle and upper class girls on the streets was somehow degrading. As early as June 1912 Nigel Bond wrote to *The Times* protesting about Alexandra Rose Day:

*the advertisement given to the fact that many of the sellers were titled and well known society women lends a air of vulgarity to the proceedings which deserves a more general discouragement.*²⁵

The nuisance factor was not to be underrated. Early in the war, when flag days were still a novelty and enthusiasm was still at its greatest, the *Liverpool Courier* could write of Union Jack Day that:

*Practically everybody one met in the street sported the national emblem. This was not surprising, for it really meant to achieve the impossible to attempt to resist the blandishments of the army of young ladies engaged in the sale of the flags.*²⁶

By 1916, attitudes had changed. In May 1916 *The Liverpool Post* complained that:

*The organisers of flag days are determined to kill the fund that lays the golden egg . . . Last week we had a flag day on behalf of the Star and Garter Home . . . two or three days later there was a flag day on behalf of a home for waifs and strays. Today ladies were selling flags for the provision of YMCA Huts . . . three street collections within the space of a week tends to destroy a movement which had been splendidly supported by the public.*²⁷

The authorities were also concerned. From mid-1915 there was pressure on the Home Office from provincial police forces and charity managers to allow local authorities powers to regulate street collections. Stories appeared in *The Times* and other papers about bogus collectors. But the Home Office was reluctant to take action, arguing that it would be difficult to form independent advisory committees to oversee flag days. In addition, it thought that regulation might interfere with open air meetings held by trade unions, and thus cause protests at a time when the government was trying to encourage trade unions to become fully involved in the war effort.

It was the moral outcry, however, which eventually forced the government to act. Increasing concern was being expressed at the use of children and young women in collecting. As women were increasingly engaged in other war work, charities were turning to young people to run the collections. In this they were encouraged by teachers, who had largely thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the war effort, with schools knitting socks for soldiers, providing eggs for

the wounded and collecting for old boys in the forces.

Concern about the employment of young people was expressed by the Association of Head Mistresses, which complained in a letter to *The Times* in July 1915 that:

These dangers concern not so much the well to do girls who at present take a leading part in such collections as the far larger number of girls and young women of all classes and every type who are being encouraged by this fashion to take up street begging in the name of patriotism and charity. It is difficult to believe that spontaneous and sober charity is no longer possible for us and that we must stoop to persuasion in order to quicken the national compassion for the wounded and destitute. Before accepting this system of street collection by our girls as an established custom should we not pause and ask 'Is it worth it?'²⁸

The Times returned to the subject the following day, commenting:

The selling of flowers, flags, and other articles for charitable objects has been much abroad, and parents of young girls proud of their patriotism and power of securing a large response from the public too often forget that the money they collected exposed them to undesirable attention.

The paper also printed letters from various readers, including one from G. Webster Bullock, who wrote:

I cannot think that the custom should be lightly tolerated were it more generally known to what familiarities and indignities girls thus lay themselves open. Two instances are before me now which if publicly known would, I venture to think, suffice to convince any and every self-respecting father that no daughter of his should have part or share in such street begging.

Unfortunately, no further details were given.

As a result of these letters and other complaints, an advisory committee was set up in London to regulate street collections in the metropolis. Among the regulations introduced was one banning young people under the age of sixteen from collecting. This brought a protest from Lord Knutsford on behalf of Queen Alexandra, who feared that her flag day would be hit by the new restrictions. He wrote to Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary:

I loathe and abhor these street collections and myself think that more harm follows from allowing girls of marriageable age and inclination to collect than from allowing children. But sentiment goes the other way, so stop the kids, allow the goats.²⁹

He was reassured that Alexandra Rose Day could continue.

It took nearly a year for the regulations to be extended outside the metropolis. There was pressure from the Association of Chief Constables, which believed that the problem was rampant across the north. Its view was corroborated by a Home Office minute which talked of the 'annoyance and obstruction of the legitimate use of the streets, moral harm to those engaged, and fraud' The Home Office was especially concerned about the temptations that children might face when it was 'discovered how easy it was to get money by anything like begging, a danger which is growing with the increasing emancipation of

children from parental control'.³⁰

These concerns should be regarded as part of the debate during the war years on what should be done with what we would now call 'teenagers'. The lives of many teenage boys and girls had naturally been profoundly affected by the war, with the conscription of fathers and the increased prosperity brought into the home by working mothers. The Home Office in particular was very concerned that this would lead to increased delinquency and encouraged the establishment of youth clubs.

Regulation of street collections was finally introduced in the Police, Factories etc (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1916. Each borough or county in England and Wales was given the powers to regulate street collections in its area. This power was widely taken up. Most, however, followed the suggested Home Office regulations. In Oxford, a typical town, street collections could only take place with a permit from the Watch Committee. Collectors had to be over sixteen and not be accompanied by an animal, and they were not to be paid. The name of the charity had to be clearly displayed.³¹

The introduction of comprehensive regulations was widely welcomed by the charities themselves. It meant that the public could now be assured that flag days were legitimate and that donations would go to some worthy cause instead of into an individual's pocket.

Although flag days were to remain important to charity finance for the rest of the war, they were increasingly seen as being part of a larger campaign to raise funds, involving fetes, concerts or collections from employees. Less than 5 per cent of the Liverpool Roll of Hope campaign which took place in the summer of 1916, in aid of the widows and orphans of men from the city who had fallen, came from a flag day.³²

Their fall from grace, but also their continuing usefulness, can be illustrated by correspondence the Stoke Newington Hospital Supply Depot had with Buckingham Palace. In April 1918 the Depot, which was affiliated to Queen Mary's Needlework Guild, received a letter from the Palace which said:

The Queen does not approve of street collections, including flag days etc, in connection with her Guild. The Committee know that it is unnecessary to express her Majesty's wishes to ensure your loyal co-operation in this matter.

Subsequent correspondence would reveal that Queen Mary felt that flag days were 'rather overdone'.³³

Be this as it may, the branch organisers felt that to obey the order would have meant the loss of a major source of income. They protested strongly. Lady Baddeley, the depot's strong-minded president, wrote to the Queen's Lady in Waiting Lady Amherst: 'It can't continue without funds and sees no other way to raise them.' The branch decided to disaffiliate from the national guild, although it later rejoined.³⁴

In conclusion, flag days showed the great support the vast majority of people had for the war. After all, there was no compulsion to buy flags, let alone volunteer to sell them. Flag days reached parts – particularly working-class communities and the loose change of the middle classes – which few charities had previously done; as Lady Baddeley wrote in one of her protest letters to

Queen Mary, 'a flag day gives the "man in the street" an opportunity of giving his mite and it is the pennies that mount up.' It also offered middle-class girls an opportunity help in war work in a generally respectable way. Only the bravest or most patriotic volunteered for munitions work. It was not until 1916 and 1917 that the Women's Land Army and the armed services recruited women to any great extent or women took over male clerical work.

Flag days raised tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of pounds for worthy causes to help the soldier at the front or in the prisoner of war camp, or the refugee in France or Serbia. Perhaps for the first time, British people were giving large amounts of money on a regular basis for good causes abroad. This led to the formation of the first modern development agency, Save the Children, in 1919.

Conversely, the authorities, including many who worked in the field, were worried about the effects that the explosion of flag days had on the charities themselves and the young volunteers who helped. In practice, although some form of regulation was probably a good idea – to reassure the public – the evils of immorality and corruption that the critics predicted never occurred.

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Other papers produced by the Society:

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