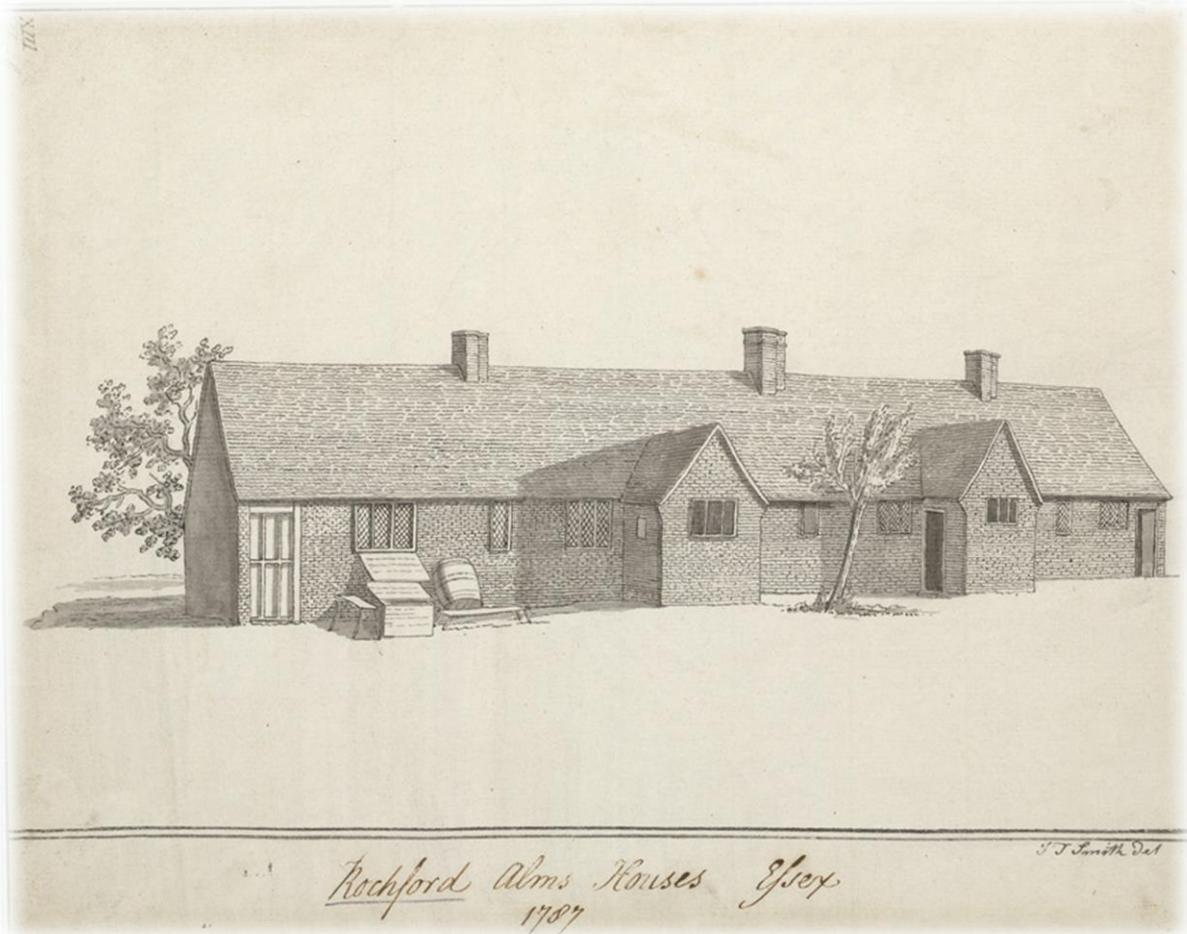


The History of British Charity

Sir Stephen Bubb



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CHARITY
FUTURES

Charity Futures

Charity Futures exists to safeguard and bolster the long-term prospects of the charitable sector. Our objective is to focus on long-term systemic development and change within the sector so as to enable charities to maximise their beneficial impact across the UK and beyond.

It's about taking the time to ask questions and to listen to the views of those who can help us make the biggest difference. It's about having the time to think. It's about not worrying about artificial deliverables.

1. Governance and leadership

The charity sector has far to come in its understanding and practice of governance, from board dynamics to the relations between chair and executive, from village foodbanks to international research institutions. Charity Futures aims to support better governance through research, thought leadership and resource signposting.

2. Collaboration

Third sector organisations cannot operate best for their beneficiaries if they do not have effective back office support. We hope to encourage donors and funders to recognise this approach and to work together supporting third sector operations in a professional manner.

3. Public perception

Charity Futures believes in the robust defence of our sector, in its activities and its people. We need to help educate the public towards a sophisticated understanding of charity needs, operations and spending.

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CEO Charity Futures

Image: Ink-wash illustration of Rochford Alms houses in Essex, 1787, John Thomas Smith

From the British Library, this image is in the public domain.

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Introduction

1. When the great anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson was in France in 1814, the Duke of Wellington was the British ambassador. They discussed how best Clarkson could influence the French government to abolish the slave trade. Wellington urged Clarkson to proceed “in our good old English fashion”, by which he meant action in the tradition of the voluntary sector that was sweeping away the British slave trade.

2. I want to explore the growth of our charity sector from its early origins as an arm of the state and as a religious activity, to its present day role in both delivering public services and also acting as campaigner and advocate.

So: a brief sketch of my argument.

I **first** trace the development of charity from its church roots to the middle ages. The Reformation caused a sea change in the charity landscape, so **second** I consider how Elizabethan lawmakers set the stage for our modern arrangements.

Third I look at the way the sector changed and flourished after the Tudors, dwelling especially on the growing role of civil society in campaigning, and the vast adjustments of the welfare state and Thatcherism.

We’re going to cross 1,400 years of history in an hour!

Charity has a long and proud history. Today we regard charity and the broader voluntary sector as crucial to the functioning of a democratic system. As Lord

Nathan said in 1952 at the start of his enquiry into charity, “democracy could hardly function effectively without voluntary action.”

3. Historians are not usually encouraged to dabble in counterfactuals, but I read PPE, so try this for a claim:

Without the third sector, we could now be living in an England that resembles the worst of William Blake’s Dark Satanic mills. Imagine the fields, woodlands and glades of the country built over for railways, factories and stockpiles. Imagine children were still sent to do heavy work 12 hours a day, toiling along with their parents in vile conditions for pittance pay, flanked by beasts of burden being slowly worked to death. Worse, imagine they are toiling alongside a host of slaves trapped in a never-ending Industrial Revolution. Imagine there are no rights to gender equality, with dissent landing you in a privately-run, privately owned prison. Imagine a towering inferno, and the recovery led by the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

Perhaps extreme, but as we will see, both the campaigning and the service delivery functions of charity have been central to the development of integral cornerstones of modern British life.

This topic immediately throws up a problem, that of definition: what is charity? Defining charity in legal terms is a long debate, and not one tackled here. Different terms are often used; I have already talked of voluntary sector and civil society. Other jargon includes ‘not for profit’, ‘third sector’ or ‘community sector’. I will duck the definition issue entirely on the grounds that if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it probably is one.

4. And then another problem is that the records on charity are poor and there is little academic study or interest, despite its importance in the development of

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the British state. The two major studies of British charity, conducted by Harvard professors, were written in 1959 by Prof W.K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480-1660*, and in 1965 by Prof David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960*. Not only has much changed in the character of charity since 1965, but histories tend to underplay the role of charity as agitator and campaigner and there is little research on the role of charity in securing social change. I would suggest it is bizarre that there is so little such research, either into charities as social phenomena or into their best functioning and modern practicalities. This is especially surprising given that most academia takes place in institutions that are themselves charities. This is all despite the fact, as Prof Frank Prochaska has commented, that:

“no country can lay a greater claim to a philanthropic tradition than Britain.”

I The beginning

5. Good stories start at the beginning, in this case in 597 A.D. with the foundation of The King's School, Canterbury by Saint Augustine, the oldest surviving charity in the UK. This characterises the fact that charitable activity for many centuries was a religious activity led and run by the monastic institutions and the church.

Charity and giving were core to the Christian faith and in the early centuries of development it is hard to see charity as a separate entity from the church itself. Indeed the early British would not have seen a charity industry at all, just one aspect of church activity. There are echoes of this approach when we look at the first broad stab at characterising the width of charity activity in the reign of Queen Elizabeth a millennium later.

6. So what are the religious foundations for charitable activities?

“Where there is charity and wisdom there is neither fear nor ignorance.”

St Francis of Assisi

The seven corporal works of mercy set out in Isaiah 58 and examined by St Augustine of Hippo back in 397AD, still form the backbone of Catholic teaching. These laid out the charitable activities – almsgiving and helping the poor - expected of any Christian desirous of reaching Heaven.

Pope Gregory IX's Encyclical of 1230 sets out an authorisation for collections of alms for charitable activities. He explains that giving is approved if done:

“...with works of great mercy, and for the sake of things eternal to sow on earth what we should gather in Heaven, the Lord returning it with increased fruit.”

I'm sure such sentiments were much in mind with William of Wykeham when, in 1379 and 1382 he was building and endowing his twin institutions of Winchester and New College.

Indeed this idea of charitable activity as an investment in the future is echoed in the Koran:

“Surely the men and women who spend in charity and give a godly loan to God will have it doubled for them and will receive a generous reward.”

57 Surah Al Hadid (The Iron)

Similar sentiments can be found in Judaism. In the Misneh Torah written by Maimonides in 1178, we read a list of charitable priorities, topped by “most blessed is helping a needy person become self sufficient by a gift or loan.”

7. In the early centuries up to the Middle Ages support for the poor, the ill, the vagrant, the old and young, hospitals & schools were provided for by and often in monasteries and churches. Where there were separate institutions established, these were church-led and church-funded. Alien as it is to our modern notions of the proper role of state and charity, prisons (‘houses of correction’) were widespread charitable institutions.

Indeed, an early prison for men and for women was established by another Bishop of Winchester at his palace in Southwark. Another, Bridewell Palace, was from the 1550s at once an orphanage, a correction house for sex workers, a poorhouse and jail.

Our notion of charity as independent of the state would have been seen as meaningless. And so for centuries there was no need to define or clarify what 'charity' was. The point is: this was about charitable uses.

Church, charity and state formed one continuum.

8. However, a nascent charity sector begins to expand and develop particularly from the 12th century. The growth of trade sees the flowering of charitable activities, which increasingly involves the laity as well as the clergy in developing hospitals, schools, and alms houses. These develop as separate institutions. People now see work in such places as a charitable service and a way to fulfil a godly vocation without entering the church or monastery.

9. I have visited two of these 12th century charities.

The Saint John's Hospital in Bath was established in 1174 to provide shelter, rudimentary medicine and support for the poorest. It survives today providing residential care and support for the elderly.

Sherburn Hospital, was established in 1181 just outside Durham by the Bishop of Durham as a leprosy hospital. Today Sherburn House Charity survives it on the same site as a nursing home and alms house with an active grants programme.

Another Co Durham institution I like is the Hospital of God in Greatham, set up in 1273 to support retiring and injured crusaders find home and support. When the supply of crusaders ran out there were still many poor and disposed in Hartlepool to cater for and today the Hospital runs an active care, housing and grantmaking service.

These ancient institutions are all still functioning today, but their evolution shows both the changes in charity and the continuities.

10. From the 14th century we see the growth of charitable confraternities, and partnerships with municipal authorities to provide charity. In essence, up to the Reformation, we see charity as largely faith-based and faith-driven, and a set of endeavours whose role was essentially to provide the welfare services for the citizenry in place of the state.

So what we now see as charitable institutions were emerging and growing.

II: The Reformation

11. The Reformation was a decisive event in the history of our charity sector. The Dissolution of the Monasteries and the disendowment of churches dislocated welfare provision and philanthropy profoundly. Masses for the dead are forbidden. Chantry chapels are removed. The monastic provision of support for the poor and sick, for schooling and support for the elderly, ends. There is no immediate replacement service. And for the Tudors this is accompanied by significant social unrest. As remedy, two key legislative measures were passed in the 43rd year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. One was the Elizabethan Poor Law, the other, the ‘Statute of Elizabeth’ (1601), properly the Charitable Uses Act.

12. The Statute of Elizabeth is really seen as setting out the foundations of charities following the end of the charitable settlement of the Middle Ages. The preamble to the act sets out a list of charitable uses. It is notable that the act, which forms the basis of our legal developments in this area, does not provide a definition of charity. This was simply not seen as important. Once again we come to the duck point – if a Tudor saw any good works that looked charitable, they were deemed charitable. The new law sets out what are charitable uses and these are essentially what we now see as public services, for example including:

“The repair of bridges, ports, havens, causeways, seabanks, houses of correction, marriage of poor maids, help for young tradesmen and decrepit persons and scholars in University.”

13. The Tudors were anxious to encourage philanthropy and giving to new charitable bodies. In 1541 Thomas Becon, a prominent Protestant reformer and cleric from Norfolk, implored,

“No Christian can live with his own wealth while men hunger and suffer.”

And this act was closely followed by the Poor Law, which set out the minimal provision the state would make for the poor. Interestingly when the great scholars of the age in Oxford and Cambridge were translating what became the King James Bible, they debated the translation of the word *caritas*, which in foreign, former and more recent translations is given as ‘love’. In 1611 though, the new Bible presented the famous injunction in I Corinthians 13:13 like this:

And now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity

14. Some have seen the start of the ‘charitable industry’ beginning with Henry VIII! As Lord Houghton said in a Parliamentary debate on the 1992 Charity Act,

“...it began with Henry VIII when he dissolved the monasteries... and the relief of the poor moved from churches to the charities and that is the origin of our charitable movement.”

This is of course an exaggeration as charities that were founded by but separate from churches were evolving from the 12th century, but it underscores a point about the dramatic changes that occurred in the 16th century and whose impact is felt today.

15. For some centuries - and indeed arguably today – the post-Reformation parliamentary effort marks the legal underpinning for charitable activity.

Charity law as it evolved from 1601 is judge-made law and has evolved in a very British fashion. Wellington would have approved. Even the most recent Charity Act, that of 2006, pays homage to the 1601 origins of charity. Hence the still extant charity status of public schools!

16. Essentially then in the 1600s the work of charitable organisations was seen mainly as the provision of public services and therefore clearly understood as the agent of the state in social policy in the period. There was no distinct tradition of a 'civil society' that challenged the status quo or acted as an advocate for the beneficiaries of such services. What little role the church had played in this, by pressuring magnates and monarchs to act in a specific way, lapsed with the break from Rome.

17. After the Reformation there was a move from giving as an act of piety, to giving as part of the dictates of social need and conscience. The development of modern charities that both provide services and act as advocates and campaigners would take longer to develop.

18. The growth in charity was aided by the use of the new form of limited company. This enabled the establishment of trusts, foundations and committees of concerned citizens, rather than individual nobles or churchmen acting alone. This also enabled more collective giving and many of the new schools and hospitals were established by committees and groups who raised funds from the public for that purpose.

The new Protestant individualism in giving was based on a desire to meet social need rather than secure favour in heaven. The growth of the mercantile class aided this increase in philanthropy and so the establishment of new charities.

For example, the banker and landowner Thomas Sutton's will of 1611 established the almshouse and school at Charterhouse, one of the largest single donations of the age.

19. Jordan's monumental study on philanthropy argues that,

"a wholesale transformation in the conception of good works occurred as religion was disassociated from charity, and a shift from religious to public charity – marked by the secularisation, institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of charitable giving – came to pass".

Jordan used a detailed analysis of charitable bequests between 1480 and 1660 to support the case that there was a large increase in charitable donations following the Reformation. Whilst there has been academic dispute about the statistics, it seems clear that there was a significant growth of charitable in this period.

20. Moving on, the 18th century marks an interesting time in the development of charitable institutions and the role that charities played. The century saw a major increase in the establishment of charities and a corresponding growth in philanthropy, but also a shift in donor views on how funds should be used.

21. For example, 31 new hospitals were created over the century. Similarly, in 1729 there were 1,429 new schools run as charitable endeavours. There are two interesting organisations established in the 18th century that are still flourishing today, and worth noting.

In 1739 the Thomas Coram Foundation, the first children's charity was set up as the Foundling Hospital to look after orphans. It attracted major benefactions, grew in popularity, and continues to discharge its mission to this day.

In 1756 the Marine Society was established and played a major role in recruitment for the Royal Navy in the Seven Years' War and later Napoleonic Wars. It survives today through a merger with the Sea Cadets.

22. Interestingly for our modern notion of how to do philanthropy, in 1796 the "Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor" aimed to provide information to donors and the public on quality of life, particularly of the urban poor. This was intended to help other charities and individuals target their aid, including allowing them to sift between the deserving and what some might now call 'scroungers'. Its aim, writes Davies, was:

"...to serve as a clearinghouse for information about the condition of the poor and for helpful ideas for improving it – useful and practical information derived from experience."

23. This marked the rise in the perception among many philanthropists that giving needs to address underlying problems as well as symptoms, though this was still largely underdeveloped until the end of the 18th century.

By then Jordan notes:

"A considerable number of rich, perceptive, and highly sophisticated donors, particularly among the merchant aristocracy, begin to sense that the crux of the problem was not so much an outright relief of the poor as the prevention of poverty itself through the enlargement of the ambit of social and economic opportunity."

24. The historian Donna Andrew wryly observes:

"English men and women of the 18th century judged it to be a great age of benevolence. They were convinced that a new phase in England's care of the poor had been initiated, vindicating for all time the superiority of the Protestant faith, which, while not making good works as a method of salvation, showed its true Christianity by its overflowing beneficence."

25. The growth in individual giving was matched by an increase in partnerships with municipal authorities, which were also concerned about the condition and support for the poor and education for the young. Indeed in many English cities and towns there were growing links between the members of the municipal Corporation and the trustees of the charity. Often the clerk of the council would be the secretary of the local town municipal charity. For example the Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust, established in 1553 and still extant, was run by the Town Clerk, a common practice.

26. Henry Fielding, the novelist, commented on the phenomenon of charity in 1749:

"Charity is the very characteristic virtue of this nation at this time. I believe we may challenge the whole world to parallel the examples which we have of late given to this sensible, this noble, this Christian virtue."

27. So as the 19th century opens we see a thriving charity sector but one with problems; many of the old institutions were seen as out of place and there were

many stories of corruption. This led to the establishment by Parliament of the Lord Brougham Commission. Set up in 1819 and reporting finally in 1834, commissioners visited practically all extant charities, some 28,000 of them. They had strong powers to wind up and merge charities if they saw fit. They produced 40 volumes of reports, recovered £13 million in misused assets, and referred 400 charities to the justice system for prosecution. The work of the Commission finally led to the establishment of a full time Charity Commission in 1853.

28. This sets the scene for a major expansion of charity but also the real beginnings of charity and civil society action where voluntary groups and associations begin to challenge the conditions of the populace and call for change. This century also sees the expansion of the role of the state in welfare and schooling, and the beginning of the debate about the role of the state as a universal provider of support to the citizenry as opposed to the spasmodic and often socially divisive approach of charity.

The charity sector itself begins to divide into, on the one hand, organisations that were established solely to provide services, explicit in their role upholding the establishment, and on the other, those which were more radical campaigning bodies.

29. The 19th century sees a major expansion in charity activity, new charities being established, staff employed and volunteers encouraged. Owen says:

“... throughout the 19th century charitable societies multiplied at a fantastic rate, few social needs failed to be represented by their own agencies.”

By the end of the century the numbers of paid professional staff employed in

charity had risen dramatically. Statistics are difficult but Owen estimates that in 1893 some 20,000 women worked in charity (not including nurses), making it one of the leading female professions. This is really the start of the professional charity sector wherein paid staff rather than unpaid trustees run the charity.

Of course the legal position hardly changed so trustees still had the legal responsibility for the running of the charity, giving rise to modern day's problems of delineating where the division between non-executive and executive lies. I have unfortunately been unable to discover when the first full time paid CEO was appointed!

30. It was perhaps inevitable with the move away from giving to secure a favour from heaven, to individual philanthropy to meet social needs, that people would begin to consider not just alleviating the consequences of poverty and deprivation but the causes of such.

31. In fact it was the later years of 18th century which saw the emergence of what we now characterise as charitable advocacy and campaigning. This concept of the civil society role in change was greatly expanded in the 19th century and now stands core to our modern conception of the role of charity and civil society.

32. The greatest example of this emerging civil society voice is the campaign to end slavery. The campaign against the slave trade and slavery itself was indeed the first great national organised voluntary sector political agitation. It established the model for other countries and other agitations during the 19th

century and beyond. In the 20th century an even greater multiplicity of national campaigns was to follow.

33. Let's look at that major anti slavery campaign. The Abolition Society was established in 1787. In 1807 the British slave trade was abolished after agitation, led largely by the Society over 20 years, though abolition of slavery throughout the Empire took longer. Whilst we tend to focus on the role of William Wilberforce and of Parliament, there was the significant popular agitation that insured that the bill was eventually passed against business and landed interests.

34. The abolitionists developed an organisation with a national network of local correspondence and committees. Strong local organisations, often linked with local churches, supported a national office coordinator spearheading national campaigns and lobbying stop. A characteristic instrument for the abolitionist campaign was the petition. One particular petition to the young Queen Victoria was signed by nearly 500,000 people.

35. Another aspect of the campaign was the wearing of badges, the equivalent of today's campaign T-shirt. Josiah Wedgwood, Unitarian member of the Abolitionist Committee, mass-produced a fine pottery medallion displaying the image of a chained black man raising his hands to heaven and the motto "Am I not a man and a brother?" This badge became extremely fashionable among gentry showing their affiliations. The Committee also organised boycotts, for example the boycott by women of West Indian sugar, which at the time was almost entirely reliant on slave labour.

36. The leaders of the agitation also collected evidence in support of their mission. Thomas Clarkson, whom we earlier encountered in his meeting with Wellington, travelled miles around the country compiling evidence of the conditions of slaves, their work and lives in America and the West Indies, and the ship passages they suffered. So innovative public relations strategies, publications, public education campaigns, and letters to the media were all ways the Abolitionists engaged in turning voters and parliamentarians against the evils of slavery.

37. The success of the anti-slavery campaign was replicated in the Radicals' agitation for reform of working conditions, the "Ten Hour Day Movement", which led to the 1847 Factory Act, promoted in Parliament by Shaftesbury. There is a wonderful thread in campaigns to lobby the government that leads through to today, from the anti-slavery badges to wrist bands demanding we make poverty history, from physical letter petitions to the Queen to collective emails and the media campaigns of great charities like Oxfam.

38. An interesting example of a well established and loved, if controversial charity is the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) established in 1824. A group of citizens, including a radical Tory MP, Richard Martin, and the Rev. Broome, were shocked by the conditions of animals in markets and determined to do something about it. Martin was able to pass a bill preventing cruelty to cattle at market, but there was little in the way of enforcement.

An early argument among the charity founders thus centred around whether they should focus solely on legislative change backed up by prosecutions, or try the softer approach as an educational body helping explain compassionate

animal ownership. The latter tactic was characterised as an intent “to spread amongst lower orders of people... a degree of moral feeling which would compel them to think and act like those of the superior class [instead of acting like brutes to animals or slaves].”

A compromise was reached so both sides won, partly because operating solely through prosecutions was ruinously expensive, meaning more emphasis was placed on essay competitions making the moral case against animal cruelty, and joint events with churches promoting animal welfare. We thus see the character of today's RSPCA resting on those early beginnings and debates. They achieved success quickly, and in 1835 the Cruelty to Animals Act was passed, building far beyond Martin's cattle bill.

39. There was considerable royal support from Queen Victoria, which earned them their Royal status. When, in a well-publicised incident, a cocker spaniel was bludgeoned to death in the street by policemen, the Queen wrote to her Private Secretary Sir Henry Ponsonby:

“Read last night about dogs and lost order. I protest vehemently against such tyranny and cruelty. Beautiful weather. The Queen”

40. Cruelty to children took somewhat longer to be tackled. Interestingly some of the early supporters of the establishment of what became of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in 1884 had been involved in the RSPCA. Indeed the first prosecutions of parents for cruelty to their children took place under animal cruelty laws. However once established, the NSPCC was successful in their campaign for legislation protecting minors and this led to the 1889 Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act.

41. Another great example of successful agitation by charities is the establishment by a group including Octavia Hill and John Stuart Mill of the Commons Preservation Society in 1865, which later became the Open Spaces Society. Organisations like this and the Ramblers Association demanded countryside-friendly planning laws and controls. The national treasures of our rights-of-way and green belt have been fought for and preserved by campaigning and direct action directed by such organisations. In this way, as in others, voluntary charity action has played a leading role in shaping our rural and urban landscapes.

42. However in the now growing and increasingly diverse sector, there were still many charities that adhered to the traditional model of provision as support for the state. A notable example is the Royal National Lifeboat Association (RNLI) founded in 1824. It was set up with the simple aim to save lives at sea and remains now, as then, solely reliant on public donation and legacies, not funds from the state. This would strike those new to our sector or indeed from abroad as odd!

43. Many other charities believed it was their task to uphold traditional values and the established order. The most prominent example was the Charitable Organisation Society, a large charity but one immured in controversy. It was founded in 1869 with the stated aim of 'organising charitable relief and repressing mendacity.'

A national society aiming to provide a 'scientific' (as they saw it) approach to charity to overcome the problems of poverty, debt and homelessness. It saw its role as providing 'machinery for systemising, without unduly controlling, the benevolence of the public'. However, many would argue that what it actually did was to pursue a crusade against mendacity, indiscriminate giving and laxity in Poor Law administration. It viewed poverty as a failing of the individual

rather than something that arose from the wider failings of society. My distant cousin Bishop Chevasse of Liverpool lamented that:

“[I]t was easier to find money for charity than deserving cases on which to spend it, a lack of response by the poor to the campaign for inducing habits of thrift, their preference for starvation in their familiar slum rather than migration under the auspices of the [Charitable Organisation] Society, all seemed to [...] bear witness to a deterioration in the moral stamina of the poor.”

However the COS did also try to engender a more scientific approach to philanthropy, and encouraging mergers and re-organisation of charities. Indeed at that time the growth of charities was causing comment. A letter in the *Times* in 1850 decried the growth in new charitable organisations, which were apparently growing at the rate of 15 to 20 each year!

44. Of course, not all giving was mere altruism. Hugh Simmons, MP for Liverpool in 1861, wrote:

"The most fashionable amusement of the present is philanthropy. We would not have the working man suppose that all the gentleman and ladies of Liverpool really do care about their condition, it is the fashion to do so because it brings them into passing contact with this Bishop or that Earl.”

45. But whilst you have the examples of the COS and the Bible Society clearly marking their roles as supporters of the established order, there was also a remarkable growth of working class movements, friendly societies and cooperatives. These movements, unions, mutuals and organisations, many of them explicitly charities and all of them building on the ethos and spirit of earlier civil society organisation, reached a peak towards the end of the 19th

century. They played an important role in political agitations like the land reform campaigns of the 1880s. They were also key in establishing the new political movement, the Labour Representation Committee. This became the Labour Party in 1906.

46. As explained by Bernard Harris, the 19th century likewise saw a move away from the state acting only as the source of the armed forces and management of the national debt, towards an increasing involvement in schools and hospitals. The later part of the century saw a real revolution in ideas about the relative domain of private and public action, though still the main responsibility for social welfare rested with charity, with government action supplementary.

47. But for most of the 19th century there was still considerable consensus that it was the role of charity to provide public services. A *Times* editorial in 1856 proclaimed:

"Among the many considerations which make an Englishman proud of his country there is hardly one which can so justly excite his patriotic satisfaction as the contemplation of its vast, numerous and richly endowed charities. We do not wait for the instigation of government or the dictation of a central bureau. The individual sees, the individual hand indicates, the social malady. Individuals' charity finds the remedy... but it is rarely, very rarely that in England any great scheme of comprehensive benevolence is initiated by the government."

48. However, the massive growth in population and the economy was beginning to challenge this consensus. By the end of the 19th century many of those involved in philanthropy, amongst others, were becoming aware of the limitations of private philanthropy as a means of meeting social needs. This was

why they became convinced of the need for more state action. The work of people like William Booth, the Methodist preacher who founded the Salvation Army, and Henry Mayhew, who wrote many popular studies of London's poor, was now highlighting the immense problems that had been thrown up by rapid industrialisation.

Charity was unable or ill-equipped to deal with the new problems, but charities acting as proto-think tanks could come up with ways for the government to help!

49. Gradually many thinkers saw the shaky geographical spread of charity as a major problem, since in the northern industrial areas charities were very thinly spread. In the absence of state provision, this meant welfare was what we'd now call a 'postcode lottery'!

50. There was also a strand of Radical political opinion which criticised the role of charity as a way the middle classes suppressed the poor. One contemporary colleague explains the view thus: "The rich giving money to the middle classes to keep the poor quiet." This has echoes in Gramsci and Marx, with religion being the foundation of and a continuing ingredient in charity meaning radicals could well read it as, if not the opiate of the masses, then at least a weak sedative.

III: To the modern charity sector

51. AJP Taylor in his history of 20th century England wrote:

“Until August 1914 a sensible law abiding Englishman could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state beyond the post office and the policeman.”

52. This is a Taylor exaggeration but it makes a point. By the 20th century however, matters were changing. Building on the growth in state-funded and state-run schools and hospitals, the state now provided a meagre pension and municipal authorities were increasingly providing public services.

53. The First World War marked a significant change in attitude, coupled with political agitation for change, the growing labour movement and a growing dissatisfaction with the vagaries of charity provision. But it was of course the aftermath of the Second World War that marked the biggest change with the establishment of a "cradle to grave" welfare state and a change in the way charities were viewed.

54. Established in 1952, the Nathan Committee took a wide ranging look at the role of the voluntary sector, and charitable trusts in particular, shortly after the birth of the modern welfare state. It concluded:

“Until less than one hundred years ago it would be broadly true to say that so far as personal needs were concerned activities of the state were confined to a deterrent Poor Law and a harsh penal system.”

Most constructive action on behalf of individuals in need of help was undertaken by voluntary agencies.

It's not my intention to go over a history of the development of the welfare state through the 20th century, but what is clear is that a major change for charity occurred following World War Two, that expectations on civil society dropped in some areas as they had achieved their goal of forcing the state to take responsibility, and that the debate about our role in relation to the government provision is still not settled. This debate is further complicated by the lobbying question.

55. We can look at the physical changes in the sector, for example the nationalisation of 1,143 charity hospitals by the NHS in 1948, but this was accompanied and facilitated by a clear political shift in the view of what charity's role was. There was public awareness and a public will for services that were of a similar standard across the country, less reliant on the generosity of local individuals or the perseverance of local activists. Charities were no longer viewed as the provider of public services but as a supplement to them.

There is ongoing debate about whether this led to a diminution of charitable giving. The consensus seems to be giving was displaced. In other words donations went more into activities that were pioneering or innovative, or where charities still played the major role such as in international development, demanding rights or environmental conservation.

56. The 1950 and 60s saw a great philosophical debate on the role of charity. The general postwar consensus included the assumption that charity provision should be secondary to state action. Indeed many thought "charity" was much a

thing of the past. However there were those, even thinkers such as William Beveridge and the Fabian political theorist G.D.H. Cole, who thought there was a severe danger in charity being entirely pushed out.

Cole wrote in 1945,

“It is a great mistake to suppose that as the scope of state action expands, the scope of voluntary action contracts.”

But he also said that the voluntary sector was "supplementing state aid instead of providing an alternative to it", so the dispensing of money came secondary in importance and the functions of advocacy and advice to the poor leapt to first place.

As for Lord Beveridge, in his report of 1948, *Voluntary Action*, he argued for,

"new ways of fruitful cooperation between public authorities and voluntary agencies... because cooperation between public and voluntary agencies is one of the special features of British public life."

57. However the political debate had moved on, and particularly for the left the idea of charity delivering public service became anathema. The theory of subsidiarity reigned. This was the idea that charity should only do those things that the state did not and where charity developed new and innovative ways of delivering services, if they worked, they should become state services.

Many in our sector embraced this new orthodoxy and completely forgot the history, so the idea that charity should have any role in running prisons for example, was greeted with horror in the 21st century despite it being an explicit charitable activity in the Elizabethan statutes.

Were it not for the efforts of civil society in establishing the early poorhouses and houses of correction, and the 18th century campaigns of John Howard and his successor charity, the Howard League for Penal Reform, then jails could conceivably have developed closer to the US model of private institutions running a profit for incarceration. Indeed when Howard began his agitation, jails could keep ex-convicts who had served their whole sentences locked up, if they were unable to pay private jailers' fees.

58. The belief in charity as pioneer reigned. The Family Planning Association put it like this in 1973: "Once a pioneering role has become established it should be taken over by the State." Likewise the senior postwar Labour Cabinet Minister Herbert Morrison said:

"Charities represent the pioneers who point the way and the critics who keep us up to the mark." This appears a considerable diminution of the role and activity of charities a hundred years before.

The widely accepted theory of subsidiarity held that the function of charity is to demonstrate the desirability of particular forms of service until such time as the state is willing to finance these services and then engage in further pioneer work.

59. Meanwhile the sector continued and indeed grew in its role of giving voice to the voiceless, raising issues that had until then been neglected in public life. Charities flexed their muscles in foreign policy over issues such as Apartheid in South Africa, Britain's support for General Pinochet, and collaboration in the Cold War. At home they represented newly vocal groups – BME communities,

vegans extending the animal rights arguments, women's liberation, LGBT activists.

But along with the breaking of the postwar consensus in the 1980s, the subsidiarity orthodoxy began to crack as spending cuts and the retreat of the public sector bit into services and many beneficiaries turned more to charity. The political orthodoxy was also cracking.

60. The 1990s saw a renewed interest in the role that the third sector could play in delivering public services, delivered by established and innovative charities, but financed by the state.

Prime minister Tony Blair said in 1994,

"We begin to see a new and exciting role for the charity sector – not an option or extra but a vital part of our economy, helping to achieve many of our social objectives."

The role of the sector took a major leap forward with the reforming New Labour changes introduced from 1997. An Office for the Third Sector was established and the first Third Sector Minister in any government world-wide was appointed. A white paper on third sector service delivery was produced. But underneath these political developments the sector itself was moving on. Increasingly charities were providing services the state could not or did not want to provide or were useless at. Charities flourished in fields like mental health, disability, education, prisons, and unemployment - all saw a growing charity service expansion.

61. This set the scene for today's charity landscape, wherein many of our bigger charities are both advocates and deliverers. So RNIB both deliver major services for the deaf but also led a successful campaign to change the way the NHS provided its services.

It is a false dilemma to suggest charity has to choose between playing a major and growing role in services, or maintaining an active campaigning role. Indeed many in the sector would argue that the experience and knowledge derived from service delivery enables better and more effective campaigning.

62. As Lord Nathan said in his 1952 report,

"While a society is alive and growing it will not make rigid choices between state action and voluntary action, but both alike will expand as the common expression of its vitality."

How wise.

63. Thus the last 50 years have confirmed the role of charity and civil society in driving change and campaigning against injustice. We can all point to the campaigns that we like, or indeed don't. The diversity of the sector is demonstrated in such crusading. The Countryside Alliance wants fox hunting back whilst the RSPCA and many others do not. Looking at many of the major social advances of later years it's been relentless and effective charity action that have delivered, from clean beaches and protected woodland, on mandatory seat belts and no smoking in public buildings, access to abortion , gay rights, disability reform ...on a plethora of issues, charity lobbying has driven public sentiment and government reaction.

This underlines one of the less well researched aspects of our charity and civil society structure - its role in ensuring a vibrant democracy. As Lord Longford reported to the Nathan Committee:

"An active, questioning charity sector is one of the guarantees of democracy... Government and democracy without voluntary exertion and voluntary idealism loses its soul."

64. This brings us back to Wellington, and his understanding of the service role and campaign role of 'our good old English fashion'. I believe I have set out convincingly that the fashion is old, and from its achievements, we can be sure the fashion is good.

But how much good?

If we are looking at total charity income, the amount is a staggering £45.5bn.

Just looking at the charity sector today we see UK charities spend £136.4 million – equivalent to £1,578 per second – improving lives and supporting communities.

Colleagues have calculated that this vast sum ranges from the £500,000 spent every hour by medical research, hospital and rehabilitation charities, to £11 million spent every day by housing charities and associations keeping a roof over people's heads. It even includes 800 cats rescued every week by animal welfare charities!

65. Whether local, national or international, the modern sector is a serious employment force – one the government should treat as a good employer as well as a good partner. While teachers, doctors and nurses would once have been almost entirely on charity books, the sector still boasts serious labour.

There were 853,091 paid workers in charities last year, and volunteering as a percentage of the adult population is robust. It is thought that some 14m people volunteer at least once a month, 27% of the adult population. Unlike in former times, we can be sure many of these will be motivated by concerns other than getting past the pearly gates!

As a sector we are now bigger than agriculture, at a mere £8.2bn income and a smaller labour force of 466,000. I'm sure we'll be hearing a lot from angry farmers as Brexit negotiations continue: just remember the third sector is twice as big and £4bn more profitable – and we don't even do it for the money!

66. We are now a diverse sector, a loose and baggy monster as the Third Sector Research Centre once proclaimed. We are a sector that delivers, campaigns, balances both.

Acts within and sometimes without the law.

Stands up for rights as well as ensuring legal change to enhance them.

Pillars of the establishment or advocates for the great unwashed.

Churches to refugee camps.

The bowls club to famine relief.

Saving lives to life saving medical research.

Campaigning for disability rights to manning the lifeboat station. Making tea in the local museum to running an Oxbridge college. And being there at the end of life or its beginning.

Tackling disasters, and where would we be without the valiant efforts of so many local and national charities who stepped into the breach at Grenfell tower when the state failed?

Sir Stephen Bubb lecture
3 July 2017
New College, Oxford

Few areas of our national life are not touched by charity. While my work now peers through the mists at the future for charity, it is always good to ask: where would we be without it?

ENDS

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