

Benefaction

Is it a good thing for a club?

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Dr John Beech

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There's only one Milan!

In an exclusive Pompey Monthly interview, Rob Treloar talks to the chairman in detail about his love affair with Portsmouth...

Mike Mansford is quite possibly the most experienced chairman in the country. Not to the people of Portsmouth, Mike is widely known as a chairman. To a certain extent he is that, because, in the course of his career, he has presided over four football clubs. Before he stepped in to rescue St. Mirren in Scotland he has, unlike so many other club chairmen, the mutual respect between the fans and Mike is unique in football. When the financial and ownership crisis of clubs in the UK first started, Mike stepped in, increasingly with his right hand on his hip, to rescue clubs for the first time in 100 years. The English media consistently makes great things of his actions. Robbed, Mansford speaks with the authority of a chairman who has seen it all. There is still plenty to be said about it all here.

"I don't know where we stand, it is, technically a better thing but there are so many great things about it. It is my old club in Portsmouth and I don't know where the time has gone. In my first five and a half years, there was a bit of struggling and hard work. When I took the club over it was without any real problems, but in and of the fact, what the club had, did not and probably always will need, is incredible support. The supporters are probably the best in the world, as far as I am concerned and they are the backbone of the club."

"Look to other chairmen and directors and they say, 'You should be proud to have such great supporters', that there is a lot of love that goes on here. But you would say, 'Why Portsmouth?' and they understand why. Although we have tremendous supporters, they don't have a club for years, not getting what they deserved. This is an honour to have, as we are able to fulfil Pompey's dream."

Robbed. As I have stated, we are in a position to keep improving and to establish ourselves. It is going to be very difficult, we it is an unique position from the rest of the club. We just have to stay on and then start building the new stadium. My aim is for people to recognise Portsmouth Football Club, as a successful and proud club of the 'Pompey Dream'."



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Sold Nice

Rescued ailing Tier 2 Portsmouth from Administration with purchase for £5m

Invested heavily and took them up to the Premiership

Sold Portsmouth for £25m

Bought Leicester

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What is benefaction?

Literally, 'doing good'

But what is 'good'?

And where does money fit into the equation?

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Related alternatives

Endowment

Sponsorship

Investment – buying shares

'Soft debt'

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Issues

Definition:

subjective v. objective

descriptive v. prescriptive

Motivation

Commitment to club/locality

Return sought

Stability over time of:

willingness to pay

ability to pay



Origins go back to professionalisation

Usually either churches or breweries

Very different, but share the outcome
of local commitment

From the 1980s external benefactors
appear

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Jerry Sherman



One of football's most unexpected marriages will be consummated when Newport County, the unfashionable and down-at-heel third division club, is taken over by Jerry Sherman, the handsome American multi-millionaire. (Times, 1 October 1986)

By February 1987, the club is facing a winding up order over debts of £600,000.

Sherman goes, and so does the club

Sherman believed to be currently in prison in Seattle for defrauding an ice hockey club

Spencer Trethewy



The 19 year-old property developer who would save Aldershot in 1990

Club was wound up

In 1994 Trethewy was imprisoned for fraud

Now manager (owner?) of Chertsey Town

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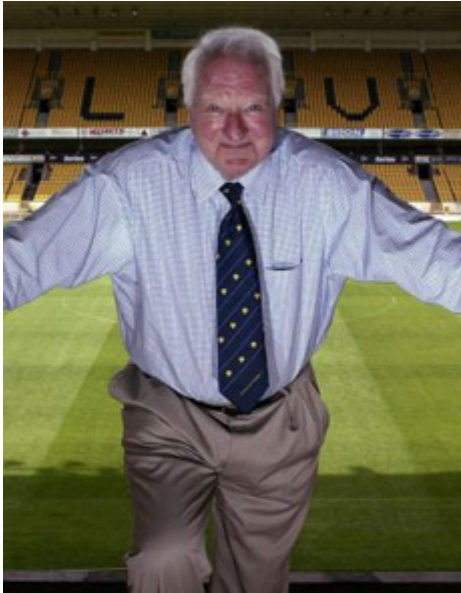
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Jack Hayward



Wolves were insolvent in 1982 and again in 1986

Hayward bought them in 1990

Quit in 2003, having lost £40m

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Roman Abramovich



Bought Chelsea from Ken Bates for £140m in 2003

Has achieved great success on the pitch

Chelsea are indebted to him for £700m in interest-free loans

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The serial benefactors

Mandaric – Nice, Portsmouth, Leicester

Vaughan – Barrow, Chester City,
Darlington (?)

Batchelor – York City, Mansfield,
Chester City

Baker – Bournemouth and, er, Chester
City

SISU – Coventry City, Derby, Ipswich,

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Patterns?

Foreign or UK is not relevant

Commitment depends on having the funding to commit

An extreme range of integrity, and hero to zero

Only absolutely massive spending seems to, in any way, 'guarantee' success

Collapse of benefaction is usually disastrous

Soft debt can turn hard when the benefactor's circumstances or motivations change

Aldershot and Newport County disappeared, as did many smaller clubs, e.g. Hornchurch

Rotherham now homeless

Northwich Victoria locked out of their stadium

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Distortion of competition

Portsmouth / Southampton

Ipswich / Norwich

Ribble Valley (e.g. Accrington /
Burnley)

Gretna

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For every club that gains on-the-pitch performance from benefaction, by definition another loses

With soft debt in particular, a club lives on its benefactor's means

Just how different is this from tactical Administration (except there are no points deductions)?



**For commentary on
the management of English football**

<http://footballmanagement.wordpress.com>

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