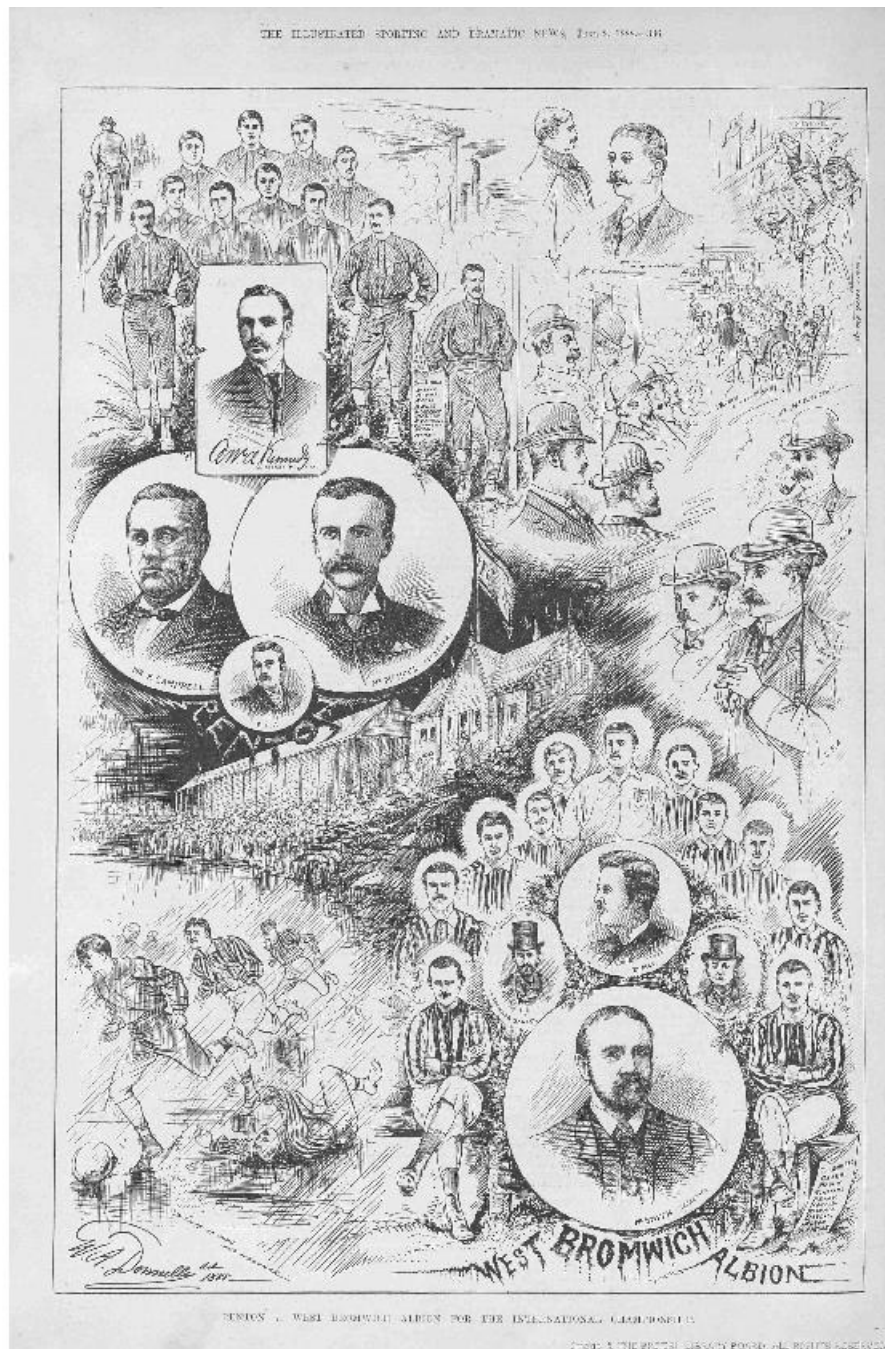


THE CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE WORLD**BY ROBERT BRADLEY AND DOUGLAS GORMAN**

A wonderful illustration records the match in 1888 after which Renton Football Club were declared "*Champions of the World*". It was published in the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News and the individual sketches include the teams, officials, the play, spectators and the atrocious weather. The artist was Dumbarton-born William A Donnelly who, as an artist and a journalist, was the Scottish correspondent for the London Illustrated News for many years. This is the story of that match.



Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, 2 June 1888 drawn by William A Donnelly
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THE EARLY SCOTTISH VERSUS ENGLISH CLUB CHALLENGE MATCHES

The first idea of a challenge match between the top English and Scottish clubs had its origins at the time the first unofficial international matches were being played between Scotland and England in 1870. Charles Alcock, who was honorary secretary of the Wanderers club as well as the Football Association, wrote to Queen's Park on 25 November 1870 issuing a challenge on behalf of his club to play eleven Scotsman living North of the Tweed. After some delay the Queen's Park committee considered the letter and decided to issue a challenge to play Wanderers in the North of England with Carlisle and Newcastle named as possible venues. The match would take place on 30 September 1871 or 7 October 1871 for either a trophy to the value of eleven guineas or eleven medals to the value of one guinea each to be retained by the winner. The match never took place. However, the clubs were to meet in the first FA Cup competition where they were drawn together in the semi-finals. Queen's Park used the funds set aside for the proposed challenge match to travel to the Oval in London to play Wanderers on 4 March 1872. The outcome was a 0:0 draw and was a fine result for Queen's Park given the lack of preparatory matches, the travelling involved and an injury to Donald Edmiston during the match. Unfortunately the club's finances did not allow the team to make a second trip to London for the replay and they were forced to scratch. Wanderers went on to win the first FA Cup competition.

The idea of the Queen's Park v Wanderers challenge match re-emerged in 1875. The clubs met at Hampden Park on 9 October 1875 and was the first visit of an English club to play in Scotland. Queen's Park won 5:0. However, in the return match in London on 5 February 1876 the Wanderers won 2:0. This was Queen's Park first-ever defeat and it had a deep effect. In July 1876 the club's match secretary was instructed to issue another challenge to Wanderers. Queen's Park got their revenge with a 6:0 win in London on 4 November 1876. However, the return match, due to be played in Glasgow on 17 March 1877, was never played as Wanderers seemed to go cool on the idea of travelling to Scotland despite an offer from Queen's Park to pay £60 to defray expenses.

A year later in 1878 the first match between the Scottish Cup and FA Cup winners took place when the Vale of Leven travelled to the Oval in London and defeated Wanderers 3:1. This was the first indication that the meeting of the two cup holders was being considered as a championship decider when the Greenock Advertiser said: *"In London the championship of the United Kingdom was virtually decided, the holders of the two national cups for the present year meeting together on Kennington Oval."* In 1883 the respective current Cup winners met again. This time Blackburn Olympic travelled to Dumbarton. Thomas Lawrie, the President of the Scottish Football Association, was asked to officiate as referee perhaps indicating that the match was of a higher status than a normal friendly match. The Lancashire visitors were treated to a very hospitable visit but they went away with two injured players and claiming that three of the Dumbarton goals in the hosts' 6:1 win were offside. The match was reported in some newspapers, but only after the event, as the *"Football Championship of the United Kingdom"*. *"Looker-on"* in the Sheffield Daily Telegraph took issue with this description of the match: *"The Dumbarton's defeat of Blackburn Olympic has been magnified by some enthusiastic writers into an international victory. It was nothing of the kind. Dumbarton hold the Scotch Cup and the Olympic the English Cup. But the match was not a contest for international championship. I dare say that more than one English club could beat Dumbarton."* However, his views may have been influenced by the late cancellation of a match between The Wednesday and Dumbarton and the chance for Sheffield to challenge the Scottish Cup holders.

Queen's Park continued to enter the FA Cup but initially the cost of travelling was a hindrance to them but later on they reached the final on two occasions. In 1885/86 they were joined with entries from Partick Thistle, Third Lanark, Rangers and Heart of Midlothian. In 1886/87 Renton and Cowairs joined these other clubs. However, in 1887 the Scottish Football Association banned Scottish clubs from entering the FA Cup.

There was clearly an appetite for competitive cross-border club matches to add to the friendly matches that were already taking place. The newspapers of the time whetted spectators' appetites when in 1887 they advertised a match between Hibernian and Preston North End as the "*Association Football Championship of the World decider*." Hibernian were holders of the Scottish Cup and Preston North End had reached the semi-finals of the FA Cup. On 13 August 1887 this match took place at Hibernian Park in Edinburgh, close to today's Easter Road Stadium. Hibernian beat Preston 2:1. Despite the misnomer the idea must have caught on.

THE ORIGINS OF THE MATCH

Renton won the Scottish Cup on 4 February 1888 and back in Lancashire, with Preston North End as the FA Cup winners presumptive, arrangements were being discussed for the two clubs to meet. The clubs made tentative arrangements to play on the Saturday after the FA Cup Final. The newspapers advocated a neutral venue and reported that Carlisle Rugby Club has been approached and were amenable to staging the match. Other reports say that Ibrox Park, Glasgow, would be used. Preston North End arrived at the Oval in London for the FA Cup Final on 24 March 1888 in a confident mood having been undefeated in their previous 42 games. This confidence led to a request that a team photograph, with the Cup, should be taken before the match so as their white shirts would be in pristine condition for the permanent record of their victory. However, Cup football is full of the unexpected! Preston North End were beaten by West Bromwich Albion and withdrew from the proposed match.

The decision for West Bromwich Albion to replace Preston North End appears to have emerged after Albion travelled to play the 3rd Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers on Easter Monday 2 April 1888 at the original Cathkin Park in Crosshill, Glasgow. Albion had brought the FA Cup with them and it was on display in the pavilion. It was reported that: "*there were many wry necks trying to get a sight of it*". An Albion official told everyone that since they had won the cup: "*it has been filled not less than 500 times*." A Third Lanark official was keen for his club to learn the secret of Albion's Cup success. Jem Bayliss, who has scored ten goals in Albion's FA Cup run, told him: "*Pray for a bit of luck and show lots of perseverance*".

With no league competitions in England and Scotland at this time the winners of the respective cup competitions were seen as the champion clubs. Despite the FA Cup Final result, Preston North End's credentials were being widely touted together with those of Aston Villa who had downed Albion's colours in that season's Birmingham Senior Cup Final. In Scotland there was also discussion on the relative strengths of Albion and Preston North End. Thirds had already beaten the new English Cup winners twice with the 3:1 win on 2 April 1888 and an earlier 0:2 defeat on 10 September 1887 but had suffered a 1:6 defeat at the hands of Preston North End at Deepdale in August 1887. Perhaps this lingering doubt was due to how the early days of professional football impacted on the clubs. The Albion players were local tradesmen, labourers, etc. who were good footballers and got paid 10/- (50p) per week. However, Preston North End imported players from Scotland and other parts and founded them well paid jobs in Preston. So they were footballers who had a second job. A subtle difference. Meanwhile in Scotland professional football had not yet been officially sanctioned. West Bromwich Albion may have got fed up with this newspaper coverage that doubted that the surprise cup winners were indeed England's champion club.

Although there is no direct evidence it is possible to see from the circumstantial evidence how Albion took Preston North End's place in the planned match. The Albion officials may well have become annoyed at the questioning of the club's status as the champions of England after their wonderful cup victory. Indeed this was their third consecutive Cup Final appearance that shows a consistently high

performance. They had beaten Preston North End in the previous season's FA Cup semi-final yet it was the Lancashire club that played Hibernian in that first World Championship match. Meanwhile in Preston the town had taken the Cup Final defeat particularly badly and may have lost enthusiasm to play in the planned game as they had no tangible claim to be champions of England. Renton officials may well have been at the Third Lanark v Albion match and probably had little time for internal English arguments. The FA Cup had been won by Albion and that was the club they needed to play. All this may have resulted in West Bromwich Albion issuing a widely reported challenge to Renton that, if accepted, would see the Albion travel to Scotland and play them at a neutral ground to decide the Champions of the United Kingdom and the World.

A few days after the match in Glasgow on 7 April 1888 came the first newspaper report that Preston North End would not be playing in the planned game and that FA Cup winners West Bromwich Albion were seeking permission from the Football Association to take their place.

Renton had accepted the challenge. On 11 April 1888 Tom Smith, the Albion secretary, wrote to Robert Cameron, the Renton match secretary:

Dear Sir,

Re. our match on 19th May in Glasgow. Have you yet succeeded in securing the Queen's Ground will you kindly let me know full particulars. The best Irish Referee will be the President of the Assn. & will you kindly ask him to officiate please. We shall play the 3rd Lanark here before we meet you. We intend to show Scotland our very best form on May 19th.

I am yours truly,

T Smith

The 1887 match in Edinburgh appears to have been a match that, after it was arranged, was given the title of World championship. However, the match to be played on 19 May 1888, perhaps encouraged by the concept of the August 1887 match, was deliberately planned as a meeting of that season's Cup winners to be played at the neutral venue of Hampden Park (the Second Hampden Park). A neutral referee, former Irish international Jack Sinclair of the Irish Football Association, was also appointed to officiate.

THE BUILD-UP TO THE MATCH

William A Donnelly said: *"The West Bromwich is one of the English clubs which have never had a Scotchman either as a coach or a player. The Renton, on the other hand, is a thoroughly representative Scotch team, so in a sense the contest might be called international, especially as each club had beaten the best teams in their respective countries".*

Renton had never played West Bromwich Albion before. However, they knew that this was a strong side who had contested three consecutive FA Cup Finals and were enjoying a very successful season with a settled team that included four players who had represented England that season. The newspaper advertisements for the match billed it as the *"Championship of the World"*.



Glasgow Evening Post - Saturday 12 May 1888
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The week before the big match on Saturday 12 May 1888 West Bromwich Albion entertained 3rd Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers in a return match at their Stoney Lane ground and won 5:2. News of a good result against a strong Thirds team would have travelled back to Scotland. However, Renton were also playing well in the Glasgow Merchants' Charity Cup that was staged in April and May. They defeated Queen's Park after a replay and then beat Rangers 5:1 in the semi-final en route to a 4:0 win in the final against Cambuslang, their opponents in the Scottish Cup Final in February.

Meanwhile in West Bromwich local supporters felt the need to write to a Glasgow evening newspaper in the week before the game to complain about the admission price. Ground admission was set at 1/- (5p) with ladies admitted free. It was pointed out that their club only charged 3d (1.25p) for FA Cup ties. Indeed, 3d (1.25p) or 6d (2.5p) seems to have been the common admission prices at the time. The writer made some scarcely veiled observations on the supposedly amateur credentials of Scottish football and wondered why an amateur club (Renton) should need to fix such high charges. However, Renton may well have come to some arrangement with host club Queen's Park over the sharing of the gate receipts. For the main stand, admission an extra 6d (2.5p), Queen's Park had a separate arrangement with the builder who constructed it at his own expense but in return was entitled to half of the receipts for three years after which ownership would transfer to the club.

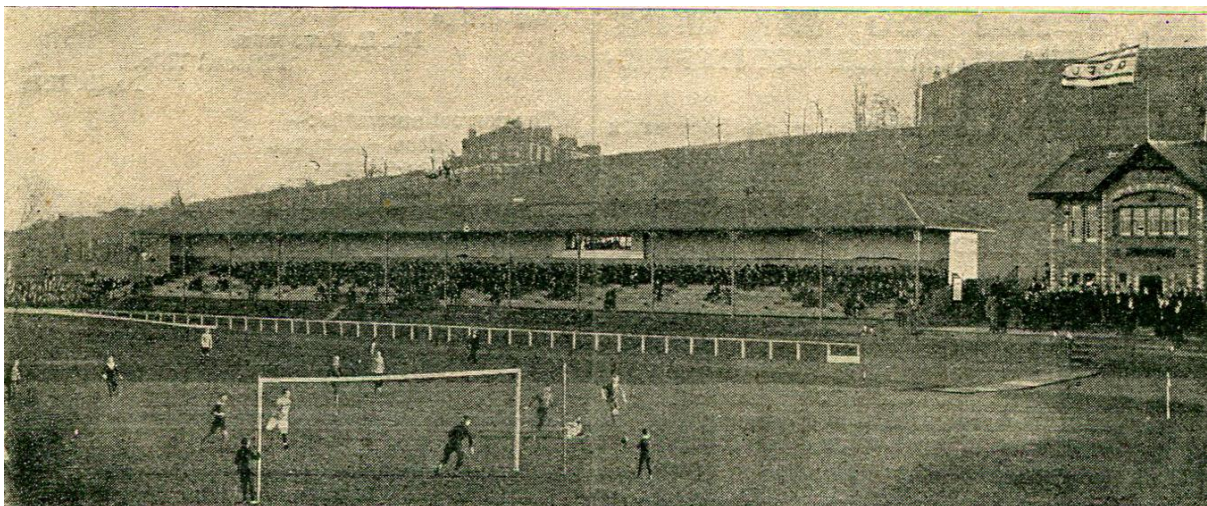
Most of the Renton players would have been employed at the Dalquhurn Turkey Dye and Print Works. They would have been preparing with daily consumption of their well-known "Chicken bree", a cocktail of port wine and eggs, as part of a tough training regime. The administrator of this concoction was trainer Peter Campbell who was also a wine merchant. It is reported that before big games two pounds of steak was added to the weekly ration of two bottles of port and two dozen eggs. "*Big Pate*" Campbell also gave his team tactics including the "*Renton charge*". In 1896 Archie Steel (writing under the pen name "*Old International*") described this tactic in his book "*Twenty Five Years of Football*".

The former Rangers player wrote: *“this consisted in the ball being propelled from the half-back line into goal, and, when in the act of being saved by the custodian, carried along with the goalkeeper, right between the posts by the entire front division – the performance representing rare unity of action and a pure display of ‘scientific force’.”*

The Albion party travelled to Glasgow arriving on Friday evening where they stayed in the Royal Hotel in George Square. At 11:00 of the morning of the match the party set off in a *“brake and four”* to visit the International Exhibition of Science, Art and Industry at Kelvingrove that had been opened by the Prince of Wales on 9 May 1888 and had been attracting daily attendances of between 20-30,000 in the previous week. Was this morning excursion to view exhibits from Geo. Salter & Co where many of the Albion players worked?

THE VENUE

Second Hampden Park became the home of Queen’s Park FC in 1884 after the extension of the railway had forced them to move from their first ground. This photograph show the ground as it would have been at the time of the Championship match. William Donnelly’s sketch takes a view from the pavilion looking down the grand stand showing the standing crowd taking some shelter under umbrellas in the lee of the two buildings and under a darkened sky.



Courtesy of QPFC.com – a historical Queen’s Park Football Club website

Queen’s Park officials were good negotiators. They got a reduction from £100 to £80 in the annual rent for the first two years of a five-year lease term. The railway company that had forced the move paid for levelling and drainage of the pitch. As already mentioned, a local builder constructed the grand stand (see photograph) on the south side of the ground next to the pavilion. The club also constructed a stand at a cost of £40 on the north side of the ground. The ground hosted Scotland international matches and Scottish Cup Finals. Queen’s Park played their last match at the ground in 1903 before moving to the Third (and current) Hampden Park. Third Lanark moved into the ground that at first became known as New Cathkin Park where they remained until the club’s demise in 1967.

THE MATCH

Although Glasgow had experience bad weather on the day before the match it was initially fine and indeed the Glasgow Evening Citizen reporter thought that it was *“too warm for football”* as the teams emerged from the pavilion ahead of the 3:30 kick-off. The same reporter noted the poor attendance, generally reported as 6,000, at the start of the match that was clearly not going to be the record

expected and less than recent cup ties on the ground. In his opinion this was largely due to the 1/- (5p) admission charge. William Donnelly reported that: *"The game was witnessed by a large and representative crowd from all grades and classes of society, from the merchant prince to the Renton 'tearer'"*.

Renton kicked off and shortly after it was clear that a thunderstorm was on its way. Albion were first into the attack but Renton won the first corner. Play continued from end to end with Donald McKechnie having a fine chance. In a lone Renton attack Bob Roberts caught the ball well but was flattened as he cleared it! Renton were having the best of the exchanges but Albion started to play well and brought a great save from Lindsay to prevent a certain goal but Albion could make nothing from the resulting corner. After 25 minutes Neil McCallum had a goal dis-allowed as he was clearly offside.

The thunder, lightning and rain now started but Renton appeared not to be put off by the atrocious conditions and John McNee beat Roberts with a cross to open the scoring.

However, Albion resumed their attack and claimed that Lindsay was behind his own goal line after throwing a ball out immediately after parrying a hard shot.

The thunder and bright flashes of lightning got worse and it was raining incessantly and hard with some hail stones. The match was stopped after 29 minutes. After ten minutes the rain cleared away and although the thunder continued the game was restarted after a ten minutes break. However, the pitch was covered with water. No sooner had play restarted than the rain started again making play very difficult. On one occasion Bob Roberts kicked the ball to safety from the centre of a pool of water! Renton had the best of the play at this time and the occasional Albion attack was comfortably dealt with by the Renton defence.

At half time with Renton leading 1:0 the teams did not retire to the pavilion but simply changed ends.

The second half started with both teams mounting attacks and it was not long before Albion equalised when they *"scored the softest goal ever witnessed on a football field. There was, in fact, no opposition."* Albion had a passing movement up that took them up to the Renton goal. John Lindsay stopped the shot but was immediately pushed aside with the ball sitting in the mud on his goal line leaving a simple tap-in for Tom Pearson.

Shortly after the rain once again began to fall heavily and the match was stopped for a few minutes.

On the resumption Renton continued to play the best in the conditions and soon after John McNee beat Bob Roberts once again to put Renton 2:1 up. At this point Albion ask for the game to be stopped but Renton declined and it continued. James McCall beat Roberts to increase Renton's lead as they were now clearly in the ascendancy. Harry Campbell scored Renton's fourth and final goal shortly before full time.

Unfortunately in a game in which Renton: *"Simply waltzed round their opposition like a cooper round a cask"* the atrocious weather played a huge part. The Glasgow Herald said: *"Thus ended a game which was without parallel in the history of football, so far as the elements were concerned. To put it shortly, it was next to impossible to play anything approaching football under such conditions."* The Glasgow Evening Times reporter shared that view and said: *"never in the experience of the oldest and most ardent partisan of the game was a match of any description, or for any purpose whatsoever, carried out to the bitter end under such weather auspices"*. "Never", said Professor Grant (Regius Professor of Practical Astronomy, Glasgow University), *"has such a terrible thunder storm been recorded in the*

Royal Observatory.” William Donnelly captures an Albion player falling in the mud in pursuit of a Renton player with the caption: *“in spite of wind and weather”*. Sadly, elsewhere in Glasgow four people lost their lives as a consequence of the storm.

Both teams were entertained at McCulloch’s Restaurant on Argyle Street before the Albion party returned home on the night mail train. William Donnelly reported that: *“Albion left with the firm belief that the best club had not won and that when the Renton visited them at Bromwich, as arranged, the present result would be reversed”*.

THE PLAYERS AND MATCH OFFICIALS

Renton (2-3-5): John Lindsay, Andrew Hannah, Archie “Baldy” McCall (Captain), Bob Kelso, James Kelly, Donald McKechnie, Neil McCallum, Henry “Harry” Campbell, John Middleton Campbell, John McNee, James McCall.

West Bromwich Albion (2-3-5): Bob Roberts, Charles Mason (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Harry Green, Ezra Horton, Charles Perry, George Timmins, Spry Woodhall, Billy Bassett, Jem Bayliss (Captain), Joe Wilson, Tom Pearson.

Goalscorers: 1-0 McNee (27 min.), 1-1 Pearson, 2-1 McNee, 3-1 J. McCall, 4-1 H. Campbell.

Referee: Mr John Sinclair (Irish FA).

Umpires: Mr McIntyre (Renton) and Mr William Bisseker (West Bromwich Albion).

Renton

The key players in the Renton team were:

John Lindsay – 3 caps for Scotland. Moved to Accrington (21 league appearances in the 1889/90 season) before returning to Scotland to play for Renton and St Bernards.

Andy Hannah - As a guest, he played in a trial match for West Bromwich Albion soon after the World Championship match. He played in a friendly against Wolverhampton Wanderers on 3 September 1888. He was asked to sign for Albion but decided against it and returned home. He returned to England to play for both Everton and Liverpool and became the only man to captain both teams. In his two seasons at Everton the club were runners-up (1889/90) and champions (1890/91) of the Football League. He played in Liverpool’s first-ever Football League match and was capped once for Scotland.

Archie McCall – Archie was the younger brother of James McCall. He was a long-serving player to his only senior club where he was twice a Cup winner (1884/85 & 1888/88) and runner-up (1885/86 & 1894/95). He was capped for Scotland once and represented the Scottish League on two occasions.

Bob Kelso – like some of the Albion players Renton’s Bob Kelso had played in three Cup Finals, winning in 1884/85 and 1887/88 and was a runner-up in 1885/86. He later moved to England and won the Football League Championship with Preston North End in 1889/90 and an FA Cup runners-up medal with Everton in 1892/93. He was capped eight times for Scotland and captained the team in his final match versus Ireland on 26 March 1898.

James Kelly – James moved to the recently-formed Celtic in 1888. At Renton he was a Scottish Cup winners twice (1884/85 & 1887/88) and a runner-up in 1885/86. At Celtic he was a Scottish League

winner three times, a Cup winner once and a Cup runner-up three times. He was capped eight times for Scotland and played for the Scottish League seven times. After retirement from playing he was a director and then chairman of Celtic. He was a prominent local figure with public appointments including a Justice of the Peace. His son, Sir Robert Kelly, was also a long-serving Celtic director and chairman.

James McCall – James was capped five times for Scotland and despite interest from other Scottish and English clubs he remained at Renton where he won the Scottish Cup twice (1884/85 & 1887/88) and was a runner-up in 1885/86.

West Bromwich Albion

The main Albion players were:

Bob Roberts – Goalkeeper “Long Bob” was a giant of a man for the times, 6ft 1in tall and weighed 14 stone but was surprisingly agile. At just 14 years 11 months of age he played, but not as a goalkeeper, in the first-ever match played by the club (as West Bromwich Albion Strollers) against Hudson’s on 23 November 1878. After trying out in a number of positions, he became the regular ‘keeper in late 1881. On 19 March 1887 he became Albion’s first-ever international player when he kept goal for England versus Scotland in a 2:3 defeat at Blackburn. He added two further caps – 7 April 1888 in a 5:1 victory in Belfast and 15 March 1890 in another win in Belfast, this time by 9:1. In the 1887/88 season he only missed 5 of Albion’s 59 matches. He was on the losing sides in Albion’s FA Cup Finals of 1885/86 and 1886/87. He made it third time lucky in 1887/88. In William Donnelly’s illustration he is at the top of the circle of Albion players wearing his England shirt.

Ezra Horton – Ezra was a defensive half-back, who often played for Albion with his younger brother Jack. He joined Albion in August 1882 and played in all of the club’s first 36 FA Cup ties. He was one of only two players to have appeared in the club’s first-ever FA Cup and Football League matches. He appeared for Albion in their three consecutive FA Cup Finals (1885/86, 1886/87 & 1887/88) He played in 55 of Albion’s 59 matches in the 1887/88 season and all at right half. His nickname was “*Ironsides*” denoting his great strength.

Charlie Perry – Charlie was one of three brothers who played for Albion. He joined the club in March 1884 and after only a few games for the first team, played in the 1885/86 FA Cup Final versus Blackburn Rovers. Though again on the losing side in the 1886/87 FA Cup Final versus Aston Villa, he was a winners in 1887/88 versus Preston North End and in 1891/92 versus Aston Villa. He went on to win three caps at centre half for England making his debut on 15 March 1890 in the 9:1 win in Belfast and made further appearance on 7 March 1891 versus Ireland and 13 March 1893 versus Wales. He played in 50 of Albion’s 59 matches in the 1887/88 season. He played for Albion until his retirement in May 1896, making 171 League appearances (14 goals).

George “Spry” Woodhall – Spry was another player who appeared in Albion’s three consecutive FA Cup Finals. He began with Albion in May 1883. His two England caps both came in 1888 on 4 February versus Wales at Crewe and 17 March versus Scotland at Hampden Park. In the 1887/88 season he made 50 appearances for Albion scoring 35 goals including scoring a goal in the FA Cup Final.

Billy Bassett – Billy joined Albion in March 1886 and shot to fame with his outstanding display in the 1887/88 FA Cup Final versus Preston North End at the age of only 19. He was rewarded with an England debut only two weeks later on 7 April 1888 versus Ireland in Belfast. This was the first of 16 England appearances (8 goals). He was on the winning side for Albion in the 1891/92 FA Cup Final and on the losing side in 1894/95. Both games were against local rivals Aston Villa. His Albion career continued

until he retired in 1899 and included 261 League appearances (59 goals). In the 1887/88 season he played in 50 of Albion's matches scoring 16 goals.

"Jem" Bayliss – Jem was the Albion captain and had joined the club in 1883 before a loan spell at Wednesbury Old Athletic in 1883/84. He was another player who played in Albion's three consecutive FA Cup Final appearances scoring a goal in Albion's win in 1887/88. A few years later he switched to right half and in this position won his only England cap on 7 March 1891 in a 6:1 win versus Ireland at Molineux, Wolverhampton. His Albion career lasted to March 1892 and included 56 league appearances (13 goals). In the 1887/88 season he made 52 appearances (40 goals) all as centre forward.

The guest player

Walsall born and bred Albert Aldridge was Albion's regular right back in the 1887/88 season. He played in the position in that season's FA Cup Final and two weeks later won his first cap for England versus Ireland in a 5:1 win in Belfast. However, as he was getting married in the summer of 1888 he decided to return to his home town club of Walsall Town Swifts. He played his last match for Albion on 7 May 1888 and Jack Horton (brother of Ezra) filled in the position temporarily. But for the important match versus Renton, Albion decided to "*borrow*" Charles Mason from Wolverhampton Wanderers as a guest player. His only other appearance for Albion was on 15 May 1886 when he "*guested*" against Preston North End at left back in a 1:0 home win. He was with Wolves from 1887 to 1892 and was their first-ever international player when he made his England debut on 5 February 1887 versus Ireland at Bramall Lane, Sheffield. He added two further caps on 4 February 1888 and 15 March 1890.

Match officials

John Sinclair – Jack Sinclair was an influential figure in Irish football. He had chaired the meeting held on 18 November 1880 at the Queen's Hotel, Belfast when the Irish Football Association was formed. He became the IFA's first chairman. His sporting career started as the captain of the Knock lacrosse team that took up football in 1879. He played two internationals for Ireland against Wales and England in 1882. He became an international umpire in 1885 and later a referee, officiating at seven international matches.

William Bisseker – Billy Bisseker was a centre forward who played for Strollers and Albion from 1879 to 1884. After retirement from playing he acted as Albion's umpire, later linesman, and travelled with the team.

Mr McIntyre – it appears that club umpires were appointed for this match. So who was the Renton umpire? Was this possibly Sammy McIntyre who had played in Renton's 1885 cup-winning team?

THE PERSONALITIES

William Donnelly provided individual sketches of the personalities who attended the match.

Top right-hand corner – *from left to right*

"*From Canada*" – this person is unidentified.

"*Mr C Campbell – the hero of 10 internationals*" - Charles Campbell of Queen's Park & Scotland (13 caps) and was later President of Queen's Park FC and the Scottish Football Association.

Mid right-hand side

Three gentleman are each identified as “SFA” and are presumably officials of the Scottish Football Association.

Inset in the Renton team - *from top and then clockwise*

“Mr A M’A Kennedy Ex president SFA” – Mr Alexander Kennedy (Dumbarton FC) was the immediate past President of the Scottish Football Association.

“Mr McHoul Secretary” – David McHoul was the Renton FC Secretary who William Donnelly described as: “*their diplomatic secretary, Mr McHoul, is able to guide their fortunes through many difficulties to ultimate success*”.

“SFA” – this is possibly Henry “Harry” McNeil who played for Queen’s Park FC and was capped 10 times for Scotland. He was later a Queen’s Park FC committee member. His name is mention in William Donnelly’s report that accompanied the illustration. Another possibility is Alexander Wylie who was the owner of the Dalquhurn Turkey Dye and Print Works at Renton and was honorary president and benefactor of the club. He was later Conservative Member of Parliament for Dumbarton.

“Mr P. Campbell” – Peter (“Big Pate”) Campbell was the Renton trainer. William Donnelly described him as: “*the father of the club; he is at least the guide, philosopher, and friend*”.

Inset in the West Bromwich Albion team - *from top and then clockwise*

“Dr Rees” – Doctor Robert Rees was vice-chairman of the Albion committee, later a director (1891-95).

“Mr Jackson chairman of committee” – Henry (“Swin”) Jackson was the club’s chairman of committee (1885-88) and later was a club director (1891-93). He was chairman of the board of directors (1891) and general secretary (1892-94).

“Mr Smith secretary” – Thomas Smith was the club’s first honorary general secretary (1884-90) and was a George Salter & Co employee. It is thought he may have played for the club in 1879. In 1884 he came up with the idea for the club’s crest of a throstle perched on the crossbar of a goal.

“Councilor [sic] Salter President of club” – George Salter, head of George Salter & Co, manufacturers of domestic weighing scales in West Bromwich. Some young employees of the George Salter firm bandied together to form a cricket club, then in the winter they turned their attentions to football, calling their team West Bromwich Strollers. It later became known as West Bromwich Albion. Many Albion players of this time also worked for the company. George Salter was Albion’s first president from 1882. He served as a director (1891-95) and was chairman of the first Albion board of directors from September 1891. He was Mayor of West Bromwich 1891-92 & 1895-97.

THE AFTERMATH

On Monday 28 May 1888 Albion travelled to Deepdale to play Preston North End and were defeated 0:2 in front of a 5,000 crowd. From the newspaper reports there appeared to be little appetite for end-of-season football and no evidence that Preston tried to claim Albion’s champion title on the back of the latest result.

On Saturday 2 June 1888 Renton defeated Preston North End 4:1 in front of 8,000 spectators at a cold, wet and stormy Hampden Park in a testimonial match for Walter Arnott (Queen's Park and Scotland).

Renton's season ended with being declared "*Champions of the World*" and with only one defeat in a 1:2 loss against local rivals Vale of Leven in the Dunbartonshire Cup.



RENTON FOOTBALL TEAM

"Champions of the World"

R. Kelso, halfback A. Hannah, back J. Lindsay, Goal A. McCall (Captain), back D. McKechnie, halfback
N. McCallum and H. Campbell, right-wing J. Kelly, centre half-back J. Campbell, centre J. McCall and J. McNee, left-wing
Winners of the Scottish and Glasgow Charity Cups

Renton commissioned a trophy to commemorate the club's achievement and the pewter cup is now on display at the Scottish Football Museum at Hampden Park, Glasgow; a short walk from the scene of the triumph at the earlier Hampden Park.



Courtesy of scottishfootballmuseum.org.uk

To emphasise their achievement a “*Champions of the World*” sign was hung at the new pavilion, built two years before, in their Tontine Park home.

In March 1888 the first steps to create the Football League were taken. Its first season was in 1888/89. The Scottish League began in the 1890/91 season. After that the accolade “*champion*” was given to league winners who had played each of the other clubs both at home and away and was a fairer reflection of the clubs’ relative performance.

THE 1887/88 SEASON

West Bromwich Albion		Renton	
Championship of the World	Runners-up	Championship of the World	Winners
FA Cup	Winners	Scottish Cup	Winners
Birmingham Senior Cup	Runners-up	Glasgow Merchants’ Charity Cup	Winners
Staffordshire Senior Cup	Runners-up	Dunbartonshire Cup	Runners-up
Walsall Senior Cup	Winners	East End Catholic Charity Cup	Winners
West Bromwich Charity Cup	Winners		
All matches		All matches	
Played	59	Played	42
Won	44	Won	36
Drawn	7	Drawn	5
Lost	8	Lost	1
Goals for	197	Goals for	178
Goals against	62	Goals against	45

Renton started the 1887/88 season with some unfinished business from the previous season; the replay of the East End Catholic Charity Cup. In the match they put six goals past Hibernian, the current Scottish Cup holders, and a week before the Edinburgh club were to win the “*Association Football Championship of the World decider*” against Preston North End. The Renton fixture list did not include matches against Rangers or 3rd Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers as agreement could not be reached on sharing gate proceeds. Renton, with a village population base but with a very good team that would attract spectators to the Glasgow grounds, wanted to share gate receipts equally. However, the Glasgow clubs wanted the home club to retain all gate receipts. In the end Renton played Rangers in Glasgow in March 1888 and won 7:3. At the end of 1887 Renton had won every match bar one draw and were the only club that was undefeated going into 1888. It was clear to everyone that this was an exceptional team.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER

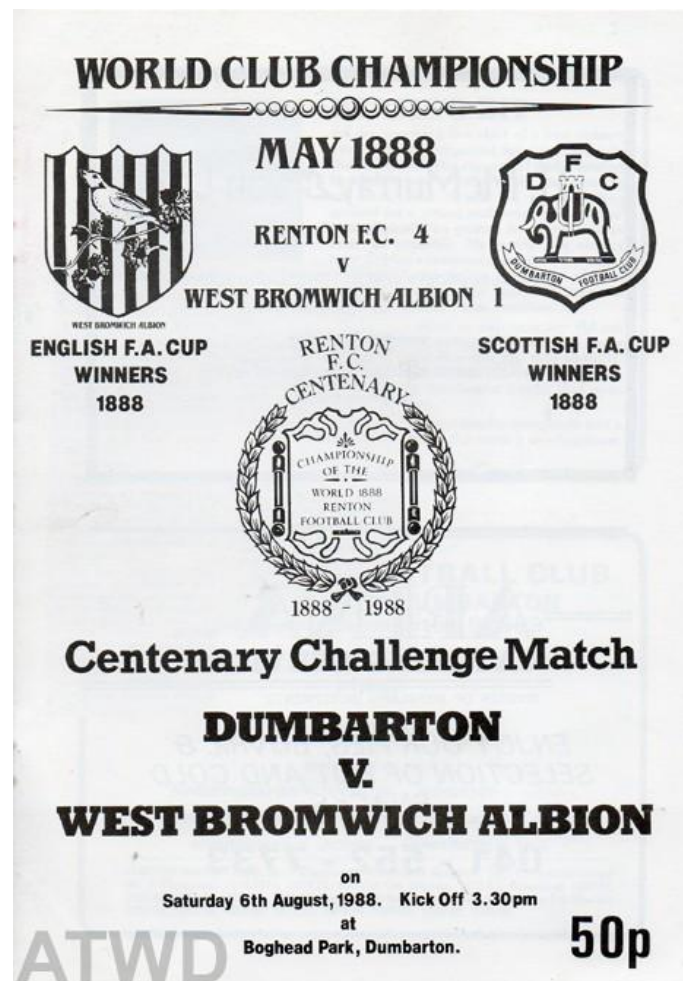
The return match at West Bromwich promised immediately after the match was never played. In fact, this was the only time Albion and Renton played against each other. However, on 6 August 1988 Albion visited Boghead Park to play Dumbarton in a friendly game to celebrate the centenary of the World Championship match. Dumbarton stepping into the boots of the now defunct Renton club.

There was no luck for Albion 100 years later when they went down to a 1:2 defeat. The local West Midlands newspaper’s match report had the headline “*Second ‘World Cup’ defeat for Albion!*”

Dumbarton 2 (0) Coyle 66m. Rooney 86m. West Bromwich Albion 1(0) Palmer 80m.

West Bromwich Albion: Stuart Naylor; Simeon Hodson, Arthur Albiston; Brian Talbot, Stacey North, Paul Dyson; Robert Hopkins, Don Goodman, John Paskin, Carlton Palmer, Colin Anderson. Substitute: Darren Bradley – who played.

Dumbarton: Hugh Stevenson; Ray Montgomerie, Craig Cranmer, Gerry Doyle, Steve McCahill, Stephen Gow, Robert Docherty, Trialist (David Fulton), Owen Coyle, Paul McGowan, Billy Blackie. Substitutes: Graham Duncan, Benny Rooney, Dominic Callan, John McQuade



Courtesy of Albion Till We Die – an independent West Bromwich Albion website

Day	Date	RENTON						WEST BROMWICH ALBION					
		Competition	Round	Opponents	Venue	Result	Score	Competition	Round	Opponents	Venue	Result	Score
Saturday	06-Aug	East End Catholic Charity Cup	Final (Replay)	Hibernian	Neutral	Won	6:0						
Saturday	13-Aug												
Tuesday	16-Aug	Friendly		Northern	Away	Won	2:0						
Thursday	18-Aug	Dumbartonshire FA Tournament		Union (Dumbarton)	Not played due to a protest.								
Saturday	20-Aug	Friendly		Cowlairs	Away	Won	4:3						
Saturday	27-Aug	Friendly		Hibernian	Away	Won	4:3	Friendly		Oldbury Town	Away	Won	1:0
Saturday	03-Sep	Scottish Cup	First Round	Union (Dumbarton)	Away	Won	6:0	Friendly		Sheffield Wednesday	Home	Won	4:1
Saturday	10-Sep	Friendly		Distillery	Away	Won	4:2	Friendly		3rd Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers	Away	Lost	0:2
Saturday	17-Sep	Friendly		Airdrieonians	Away	Won	3:2	Friendly		Stoke	Home	Won	4:0
Saturday	24-Sep	Scottish Cup	Second Round	Dumbarton Athletic	Home	Won	4:2	Friendly		Bolton Wanderers	away	Drawn	1:1
Saturday	01-Oct	Friendly		Queen's Park	Home	Won	4:1	Staffordshire Senior Cup	First Round	Burton Wanderers	Away	Won	12:2
Monday	03-Oct							Friendly		Notts County	Home	Won	5:1
Saturday	08-Oct	Friendly		Northern	Home	Drawn	2:2	Birmingham Senior Cup	First Round	Small Heath Alliance	Home	Won	2:0
Saturday	15-Oct	Scottish Cup	Third Round	Camelon	Away	Won	8:0	FA Cup	First Round	Wednesbury Old Athletic	Home	Won	7:1
Monday	17-Oct							Friendly		Walsall Town	Home	Won	8:0
Saturday	22-Oct	Friendly		Clyde	Away	Won	5:0	Friendly		Blackburn Rovers	Away	Lost	6:7
Saturday	29-Oct	Friendly		Partick Thistle	Home	Won	5:0	Friendly		Lincoln City	Home	Won	4:1
Monday	31-Oct							Birmingham Senior Cup	Second Round	Burslem Port Vale	Away	Won	3:0
Saturday	05-Nov	Scottish Cup	Fourth Round	Linderitis (Kirriemuir)	Away	Won	13:1	FA Cup	Second Round	Mitchell's St George's	Away	Won	1:0
Monday	07-Nov							Friendly		Bolton Wanderers	Home	Won	6:0
Saturday	12-Nov	Friendly		Cambuslang	Home	Won	4:0	Friendly		Preston North End	Away	Lost	2:4
Monday	14-Nov							Brockmoor Colliery Relief Fund		Brierley Hill Alliance	Away	Won	3:0
Saturday	19-Nov	Dumbartonshire Cup	Second Round	Vale of Leven Hibernian	Home	Won	9:1	Birmingham Senior Cup	Third Round	Aston Shakespeare	Home	Won	3:0
Monday	21-Nov							Friendly		Oxford University	Away	Won	6:2
Saturday	26-Nov	Original opponents were Cambuslang but they were playing in the Scottish Cup. Very bad weather.						FA Cup	Third Round	Wolverhampton Wanderers	Home	Won	2:0
Monday	28-Nov							Staffordshire Senior Cup	Second Round	Wednesbury Old Athletic	Away	Won	2:1
Saturday	03-Dec	Scottish Cup	Fifth Round	St Mirren	Away	Won	3:2	Friendly		Burnley	Home	Won	3:0
Monday	05-Dec							Friendly		Cambridge University	Home	Won	5:0
Saturday	10-Dec	Dumbartonshire Cup	Third Round	Dumbarton	Home	Won	1:0	Friendly		Lincoln City	Away	Won	6:1
Monday	12-Dec							Walsall Senior Cup	First Round (2nd Replay)	Oldbury Town	Away	Won	5:1
Saturday	17-Dec	Scottish Cup	Sixth Round	Wanderers (Dundee)	Home	Won	5:1	Friendly		Long Eaton Rangers	Home	Won	3:1
Saturday	24-Dec	Friendly		Vale of Leven	Home	Won	4:1	Birmingham Senior Cup	Fourth Round	Mitchell's St George's	Home	Won	4:0
Monday	26-Dec							Friendly		Wolverhampton Wanderers	Home	Drawn	1:1
Saturday	31-Dec	Friendly		Strathmore (Dundee)	Away	Won	4:2	Staffordshire Senior Cup	Third Round	Leek	Away	Won	3:2
Monday	02-Jan	Friendly		Harp (Dundee)	Away	Won	5:0						
Tuesday	03-Jan	Friendly		Forfar Athletic	Away	Won	4:0						
Saturday	07-Jan			Original opponents were Clyde but they played Hearts.				FA Cup	Fifth Round*	Stoke	Home	Won	4:1
Saturday	14-Jan	Scottish Cup	Semi Final	Queen's Park	Home	Won	3:1	Friendly		Notts County	Away	Drawn	3:3
Saturday	21-Jan	Dumbartonshire Cup	Semi Final	Dumbarton Athletic	Away	Won	6:0	Friendly		Wolverhampton Wanderers	Away	Won	5:0
Saturday	28-Jan	Original opponents were St Mirren but they played Airdrie. Dumbartonshire played Edinburgh with Renton players.						FA Cup	Sixth Round	Old Carthusians	Home	Won	4:2
Saturday	04-Feb	Scottish Cup	Final	Cambuslang	Neutral	Won	6:1						
Monday	06-Feb							Friendly		Oxford University	Home	Won	5:0
Saturday	11-Feb	Dumbartonshire Cup	Final	Vale of Leven	Neutral	Lost	1:2	Birmingham Senior Cup	Semi Final	Wolverhampton Wanderers	Home	Won	2:0
Saturday	18-Feb	Airdrieonians were originally scheduled but International trial held on that day involving Renton players.						FA Cup	Semi Final	Derby Junction	Neutral	Won	3:0
Saturday	25-Feb	Friendly		Heart of Midlothian	Away	Won	3:0	Friendly		Aston Villa	Home	Won	4:1
Monday	27-Feb							Friendly		Cambridge University	Away	Won	6:1
Saturday	03-Mar	Friendly		Rangers	Away	Won	7:3	Birmingham Senior Cup	Final	Aston Villa	Neutral	Lost	2:3
Saturday	10-Mar	Friendly		Queen's Park	Away	Drawn	1:1	Friendly		Aston Villa	Away	Won	4:0
Saturday	17-Mar	Hibernian were originally scheduled. Scotland v England match played.						Staffordshire Senior Cup	Semi Final	Stoke	Away	Won	1:0
Saturday	24-Mar	Friendly		Partick Thistle	Away	Won	4:2	FA Cup	Final	Preston North End	Neutral	Won	2:1
Saturday	31-Mar	Friendly		St Mirren	Home	Won	5:2	Staffordshire Senior Cup	Final	Wolverhampton Wanderers	Neutral	Drawn	0:0
Easter Monday	02-Apr							Friendly		3rd Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers	Away	Lost	0:3
Tuesday	03-Apr							Friendly		Newcastle West End	Away	Won	5:1
Saturday	07-Apr	Friendly		Kilmarnock	Away	Drawn	1:1	Friendly		Everton	Away	Won	1:0
Saturday	14-Apr	Friendly		Morton	Home	Drawn	2:2	Staffordshire Senior Cup	Final (Replay)	Wolverhampton Wanderers	Neutral	Drawn	1:1
Monday	16-Apr							Friendly		Burnley	Away	Won	1:0
Thursday	19-Apr	Glasgow Merchants' Charity Cup	First Round	Queen's Park	Neutral	Drawn	2:2						
Saturday	21-Apr	Friendly		Sunderland	Away	Won	4:2	Friendly		Preston North End	Home	Drawn	2:2
Saturday	28-Apr	Friendly		Vale of Leven	Away	Won	5:0	Staffordshire Senior Cup	Final (2nd Replay)	Wolverhampton Wanderers	Home	Lost	1:2
Wednesday	02-May	Glasgow Merchants' Charity Cup	First Round (Replay)	Queen's Park	Neutral	Won	2:0						
Saturday	05-May	Glasgow Merchants' Charity Cup	Semi Final	Rangers	Neutral	Won	5:1	Friendly		Blackburn Rovers	Home	Won	2:1
Monday	07-May							West Bromwich Charity Cup	Semi Final	Wednesbury Old Athletic	Home	Won	4:1
Saturday	12-May	Glasgow Merchants' Charity Cup	Final	Cambuslang	Neutral	Won	4:0	Friendly		3rd Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers	Home	Won	5:2
Wednesday	16-May							Friendly		Great Bridge Unity	Away	Won	3:0
Saturday	19-May	Championship of the World		West Bromwich Albion	Neutral	Won	4:1	Championship of the World		Renton	Neutral	Lost	1:4
Monday	21-May							West Bromwich Charity Cup	Final	Great Bridge Unity	Home	Won	10:1
Tuesday	22-May							Benefit match for Bob Roberts		Walsall Town Swifts	Home	Won	3:0
Saturday	26-May							Friendly		Aston Villa	Away	Drawn	1:1
Monday	28-May							Friendly		Preston North End	Away	lost	0:2
Saturday	02-Jun	Benefit match for Walter Amott		Preston North End	Neutral	Won	4:1						

NOTE:

Fifth Round*

Walsall Senior Cup

Awarded bye into Fourth Round.

The second team fulfilled all fixtures in the competition except this one match.