The Week’s Good Cause: Mass Culture and Cultures of Philanthropy at the Inter-war BBC

Abstract
This article examines the intersections between philanthropy and mass culture at the inter-war BBC through an analysis of the Week’s Good Cause charity appeals. Building on Dan LeMahieu’s work on the media in the inter-war period, it explores how this new mode of cultural interventionism was used to disseminate and re-articulate older messages about charity and the new duties of citizens. The Good Cause appeals mapped an expansive notion of positive citizenship which encompassed both the private and social domains of listeners’ lives and bureaucratized and popular understandings of charity. Encoding a reworked idea of ‘deservingness’, the appeals were part of a wider BBC narrative about British civil society between the wars, which reanimated a vital and enduring Victorian heritage, even whilst at times presenting ‘progress’ upon it. Through drawing on new psychological thinking about the commercial subject, and on the popular appeal of a burgeoning celebrity culture, the article argues that the Good Cause appeals pioneered a form of philanthropic fundraising between the wars (taken up in other inter-war BBC output) based upon drama, human interest, and ‘listener identification’. It concludes by using the Good Cause appeals to critique...
any supposed opposition between civic and cultural paradigms, arguing that in the inter-war years the appeals projected an integrated message about charity and citizenship which crossed over cultural, commercial, and political boundaries.

On 17 February 1923, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) broadcast a live wireless appeal for a charity supporting homeless First World War veterans, the Winter Distress League. Presented by writer and army Major Ian Hay, the appeal raised £26 6s. 6d. This was a modest sum that reflected the novelty of the Winter Distress League’s fundraising strategy, but it set a precedent for how the medium could be used to connect with the public in new ways. Over the next few years the BBC broadcast wireless charity appeals at times of disaster and on matters of peculiar urgency, until early 1927 when the first Week’s Good Cause appeal was aired. The Week’s Good Cause was broadcast alternately from national and regional stations in a five-minute slot every Sunday at 8.55 p.m., immediately before the 9 p.m. news broadcast. It was cancelled on the outbreak of the Second World War but resumed thereafter, and has remained a weekly fixture, broadcast today on BBC Radio 4 on Sundays at 8.55 a.m. Aggregate results of the inter-war Week’s Good Cause appeals show the effectiveness of the feature in reaching out to listeners. In 1927, listeners gave £40,232 to the BBC’s chosen Good Causes, by 1930 they were giving over £54,000, and in 1937 they gave £139,368. These figures are small compared with the millions of pounds raised by high-profile charity appeals today, but they were striking in the inter-war years, a period when the average British worker’s earnings was just £2–£3 per week, and when the 1930s was characterized by an economic slump. Donations to the Good Cause appeals were made in lump sums, weekly instalments, and probate bequests. It is difficult to paint a detailed picture of listeners who donated to the appeals anonymously, and who before 1938 are not captured in BBC audience research. However, in 1929, BBC committee minutes recorded that the majority of donors were from the ‘well-to-do’ classes, and that donations were more likely to happen in the winter than in the summer (when the

1 Caversham, BBC Written Archive Centre (hereafter BBC WAC), R7/5/1, Appeals policy, 1928–45, Memo from O. P. D. to Mr G. M. Stevenson, ‘Appeals in Empire programmes’, 17 July 1939.
2 BBC WAC, R7/18/1, Central Appeals Advisory Committee Minutes, 1927–39, File 1, ‘Yearly Totals of the Week’s Good Cause’; ‘The Week’s Good Cause’, The Listener, 6 April 1938, 726.
3 BBC WAC, R7/11, Appeals Bequests to Week’s Good Cause, 1931–43.
better-off were holidaying). From the mid-1930s, BBC personnel conducted geographical analyses of donations, observing the highest number of donations typically came from listeners in London and the Home Counties, but also specifying the regional diversity of donors, encompassing ‘north of the Tweed’ (Scotland by the 1930s had its own Week’s Good Cause programme), south as far as the Channel Islands, the West Country and Wales, and ‘East of the Trent’. The increased overall effectiveness of the Week’s Good Cause appeals in the inter-war period can in part be explained by a growth in the number of wireless listeners: radio licence holders increased from a total of 2,178,259 in 1927 (the year the BBC acquired legal status as a Corporation) to 9,082,666 by 1939. In part, the increase might have reflected a dovetailing in the messages delivered in charity appeals and news coverage. But the effectiveness was also premised on a level above these factors. Fundamentally, the statistics illustrate the overlapping sponsorship of charities by the BBC and subsections of its listening public.

What does the success of these charity appeals, then, tell us about the cultural practices of inter-war philanthropy? We might push this further—what did an aural apparatus of charity fundraising mean to the first generation of wireless listeners? With these questions as its starting-point, this article uses the inter-war BBC’s Week’s Good Cause feature (alongside other written and spoken output of the early BBC) to explore the social, cultural, psychological, and technological impetus underpinning the mechanics of philanthropy in inter-war Britain. My approach is prompted by Dan LeMahieu’s 1988 work on the media in this period. LeMahieu emphasized that the British elite saw the new forms of mass communication that opened up in the inter-war period—ranging from film to wireless via the new print journalism—as representing new opportunities for, and modes of, cultural intervention. There was no prescribed pattern for the new forms of mass communication; rather this was a period when individuals were engaged in assessing and illuminating their possibilities and practical uses. For LeMahieu, the BBC perfectly exemplified a new cultural vehicle in which functionaries ‘adapted new technologies to evolving traditions’. This process of adaptation was part of the socially reformist

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5 BBC WAC, R6/1/1, ‘Advisory Committees: Appeals Advisory Committee Reports, File 1, 1928–30’: ‘Appeals Advisory Committee, 29 October 1929, Secretary’s Report, March to October’.
and culturally elitist vision of a progressive strand of British public servants who sought to diffuse the values of their particular class system. ‘In the 1920s, the BBC sought not only to uplift the standards of the general population’, LeMahieu argued, ‘but also, perhaps more urgently, to justify itself amongst the middle-classes, whose cultural traditions the BBC self-consciously idealized in its programming’.8

It is worth thinking carefully about LeMahieu’s construction of technology as a mechanism for the re-articulation, and in some cases revitalization, of middle-class traditions in inter-war Britain. LeMahieu discussed the BBC’s reconceptualizations of ‘bourgeois culture’ in terms of its broadcasts of classical music and religion.9 Philanthropy, which in many cases retained a critical connection to religion, was an equally vital and significant national tradition, which occupied an identifiably middle-class domain of social activity.10 Philanthropy is a broad category, encompassing a range of voluntary action from large-scale global institutional charities to impromptu individual acts of altruism. It is used here to refer to the set of ideas and practices associated with personal benevolence—the giving of both time and money. In the inter-war years, philanthropy was a hotly debated subject, inspiring comment not only from practitioners, but from journalists, politicians, psychologists, and sociologists.11 Inter-war commentators discussed philanthropy in terms of a dialogue between an older narrative of social activism as a direct relationship between giver and receiver, and newer notions of social rights, grass-roots activism, and community relations.12 The particular fertility of inter-war cultures of philanthropy, which was in large part derived from the creative tensions between these two models, has received remarkably little scholarly attention, and has typically fallen into the shadow of a perceived ‘golden age’ of Victorian philanthropy.13 This omission overlooks the place accorded to

9 LeMahieu, Culture for Democracy, 180–9.
10 P. Mandler argues that ‘philanthropy had always been a part of the English national character’, The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair (New Haven, CT; London, 2006), 110. Female philanthropy is often understood as a middle-class practice, see e.g. F. Prochaska, Female Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England (Oxford, 1980).
11 A point noted by C. Braithwaite, alongside her surprise that there were so few book-length discussions about philanthropy, The Voluntary Citizen: An Enquiry into the Place of Philanthropy in the Community (London, 1938), 2.
12 Two influential discussions of this relationship were E. Macadam, The New Philanthropy: A Study of the Relations Between the Statutory and Voluntary Social Services (London, 1934) and Braithwaite, The Voluntary Citizen.
13 For a recent iteration of this argument, see F. Prochaska, Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit (Oxford, 2006).
philanthropy by inter-war commentators within broader discussions about civil society. Philanthropy played a critical part in debates that attempted to redefine the relationship between state and citizen on the basis of expanded models of political and social citizenship.\textsuperscript{14} The inter-war BBC’s Good Cause appeals show a reworking of Britain’s philanthropic heritage in debates about civil society through a new aural medium of mass communication. Through these structures, the broadcasts focused a form of philanthropy that, even if in some senses it was premised on middle-class values and hierarchies, nevertheless strove to build bridges of human sympathy and identification across the class divide. Produced by BBC employees in dialogue with charity organizations, broadcasters, and an engaged listening public, the Good Cause appeals open a window onto the varied operational dynamics of inter-war philanthropy. Medium and message intersected in these appeals, and the realms of mass culture and philanthropy were intertwined.

In exploring the cultural registers through which the Week’s Good Cause feature distilled the discourse of philanthropy, this article reappraises some of the dominant motifs of inter-war cultural history. Being sensitive to the re-articulations of long-established cultural codes of philanthropic effort in the Week’s Good Cause, it complicates narratives that present the mass culture that took shape in the years after the First World War as an exemplification of a modernity from which philanthropy was conceptually disassociated. Focusing attention upon the ways in which the Good Cause appeals helped to reposition civil agency, it opens up an alternative perspective on the dominant narrative of inter-war cultural history which highlights commercialism and profit as the critical motors of change.\textsuperscript{15} Along with the London Underground and Imperial Chemical Industries, historians have identified the BBC as the most famous of the inter-war corporations, in a period in part defined by the rise of corporatism.\textsuperscript{16} Founded in

\textsuperscript{14} P. Taylor discusses this process as a form of ‘public diplomacy’, British Propaganda in the 20th Century: Selling Democracy (Edinburgh, 1999), esp. chs 4–6.

\textsuperscript{15} Although a growing historiography considers the relationship between consumer culture and civil society, see e.g. M. Daunton and M. Hilton, eds, The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America (Oxford, 2001); F. Trentmann, Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption, and Civil Society in Modern Britain (Oxford, 2008).

October 1922 as the British Broadcasting Company, in 1926 the BBC became a public corporation free of direct parliamentary accountability, regulated by the General Post Office and independently financed through a licence fee. The contemporary ‘modern’ pressures shaping the rise of inter-war corporatism (new business models and the rise of labour) have been well understood, but the nature of the ethics enshrined within the corporatist model much less so. The BBC’s corporatism was closely connected to long-established principles of philanthropic giving. This ethic, which played through the Good Cause appeals directly, can be traced through several layers. Key personalities in the early BBC constructed it as part of the BBC’s self-image as a body; most notably its first Director-General John Reith, but also heads of the education and religious departments J. C. Stobart and Frederic A. Iremonger, who produced the Good Cause feature. It reflected the socially interventionist mood of the inter-war period, espoused by elites and sub-elites across economic and cultural domains. It was also fundamentally sustained by the entrepreneurship of some appeals and the methods used to elicit both the compassion and identification of listeners. With its aims to ‘educate, inform and entertain’, the inter-war BBC and philanthropy shared didactic and artistic spaces for social improvement and for shaping positive active citizenship. They shared additionally a common linguistic landscape that foregrounded the personal relationship between a subject and his or her constituency, whether fashioned as broadcaster and listener, or giver and receiver.

The remainder of this article addresses these issues in four parts. Part one looks at the ways in which the BBC Week’s Good Cause appeals contributed to reformulating popular notions of active citizenship through exploring how it ‘mapped’ a distinctive terrain of inter-war charity. The second part analyses the relationship between Victorian and inter-war values of philanthropy as disseminated through the Good Cause feature and other inter-war BBC broadcast and written output, exploring both the inter-generational connections that underpinned their approaches and content and the chronological and cultural distances in play. The third part considers the significance of new thinking in psychology in the development of charitable fundraising.

sponsored by the inter-war BBC. Focusing on the concept of ‘listener identification’, it argues that the dramatic devices used in the Week’s Good Cause appeals, and new techniques in print journalism, reveal emerging thinking about the need to construct an immediate relationship between giver and receiver. The article concludes by using the Week’s Good Cause appeals to critique any supposed opposition between civic and cultural paradigms, arguing that the feature embodied an overlap between these realms, negotiated in particular through what Michael Bailey describes as the BBC’s overarching ‘religious, missionary zeal’.\(^\text{20}\) Charity appeals could project an integrated message about charity and citizenship which crossed over cultural, commercial, and political boundaries.

1. Mapping Citizenship through *The Week’s Good Cause*

The BBC’s goals of moral uplift embedded under its first Director-General John Reith are well known. In *Broadcast over Britain* (1924), Reith conceived of the BBC as a public utility, measured in terms of its value as a tool of social improvement. It was ‘better to over-estimate the public mentality’, Reith wrote, ‘than to under-estimate it’.\(^\text{21}\) There was, as Ian McInytine and LeMahieu show, both an obviously (and interlinked) Christian and a pedagogic aspect to Reithian philosophy, which drew on nineteenth-century reformist thinking about the place of culture in society.\(^\text{22}\) The continuities between this Victorian intellectual inheritance and its expression in the inter-war years are clear in a figure such as Reith, but in the new world of inter-war philanthropic fundraising, the BBC also moved forcefully beyond forms of earnest Victorian didacticism and paternalist conceptions of public service, employing radically new forms of communication to articulate the more traditional goals of philanthropy in terms of the duties of the new citizen.\(^\text{23}\) Laura Mayhall’s work on women’s suffrage and Bill Schwartz’s on Baldwinitie conservatism shows how the discourse of citizenship was reconceptualized as more than narrowly political by


\(^{21}\) J. C. W. Reith, *Broadcast over Britain* (London, 1924), 34.


\(^{23}\) On the repositioning of Reith’s philosophy from the Victorian into the inter-war worlds, see LeMahieu, ‘John Reith’.
various groups that perceived the body politic and mass democracy as inextricably linked to cultural mechanisms.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, the diverse focus of recent scholarship on inter-war citizenship suggests that the notion was omnipresent in men and women’s lives in this period.\textsuperscript{25} In mapping the faultlines of charity, the inter-war BBC’s Good Cause appeals invoked the role of mass culture as contributing to the reformulation of the relationship between state, civil society, and citizen. However, the appeals did not simply construct a top-down or ‘conservative’ message about the place and value of philanthropic effort within society. They also looked outwards to, and were shaped by, popular understandings of charity. The process of creating positive active citizenship was two-way.

The BBC’s attempts to locate the balance of power in this interchange of values revealed its awareness of this dialogue. An article about the administrative apparatus of the Week’s Good Cause in the BBC’s programming magazine the \textit{Radio Times} in December 1927 outlined this tension. On the one hand, the article downplayed the BBC’s agency in the feature, characterizing it as performing the culturally brokering role of ‘almoner’, bridging the administrative gap between charities and the general public by collecting the donated funds.\textsuperscript{26} On the other hand, it suggested that the Week’s Good Cause was actually a systemized intervention into the location and operation of civil society, over which the BBC had a large degree of control. ‘It was decided’, the \textit{Radio Times} journalist wrote, ‘not to leave the initiative to the promoters of good causes, but to map out the field of charity systematically, and ensure that the interest of, for example, hospitals, convalescent homes, children, social services, and the charitable funds attached to the national services, should have due recognition in their proper place.’\textsuperscript{27} Indeed, the BBC controlled the parameters of the Good Cause feature at both intellectual and programmatic levels. Even at the first stage of the appeal process—compiling lists of potential charity appeals—some BBC employees believed that regional station directors ought to elect local


\textsuperscript{26} ‘The Week’s Good Cause: How the BBC’s Appeals are Administered’, \textit{Radio Times}, 30 December 1927, 710. The term ‘almoner’ had a dual resonance here, referencing both the general act of giving charity and the specific role of the hospital almoner, who straddled the gap between medical professionals and their patients—a role made redundant by the mature National Health Service.

\textsuperscript{27} ‘The Week’s Good Cause’, \textit{Radio Times}, 30 December 1927, 710.
charities and network with their representatives. In practice, this was rarely done; it was more usual for charities to approach the BBC. Nevertheless, the process of assessing and evaluating proposed charities both stamped the BBC’s social vision onto the feature and developed the bureaucratization of the charity sector in its manifestation within mass culture.

The bureaucratized vision of charity was made tangible through the BBC’s commissioning in late 1926 of a Central Appeals Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee comprised BBC Managing Director John Reith (who became Director-General in 1927) and seven ‘outside experts’ who represented specific branches of knowledge in the public service and voluntary sectors. Reith’s colleagues on the committee were: R. C. Norman (Late Cave Hospital Commission, Chair), Captain L. F. Ellis (National Council of Social Services), Lady Mary Gertrude Emmott (President of the National Council of Women), Dr Frederick Norton Kay Menzies (Medical Officer of Health, London City Council), Brigadier-General R. H. More (United Services Fund), Dr A. H. Norris (Children’s Branch, Home Office), and Edward C. Price (Charity Organisation Society). The emphasis on committee members’ varied expertise signalled an organizational ideal of neutrality.28 However, committee members directly influenced the intellectual construction of charities in the Good Cause appeals because their fields of professional and administrative experience determined the categorizations that framed the feature. In fact, only charities that fell into the committee’s categorization system of ‘Health, The Services, Children, Social Service, Women’s Charities, and Miscellaneous’ were considered for appeals.29 Charities that were deemed to fit this remit included in 1928 the London Hospital, the Adair Wounded Fund, Dr Barnados’ Homes, St Martin’s Christmas Fund, and Friends of the Poor; in 1933, the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, St Columba Hospital, St Martin’s Summer Holiday Fund and Christmas Fund, the British Legion, and the London Hospital; and in 1938 the Winter Distress League, Subsistence Production Society, British Empire Leprosy Relief Association, St Martin’s Summer Appeal, and the British Wireless Fund for the Blind.30 There was some degree of variety within this coverage, but there was also a clear inclination towards certain charities (e.g. St Martin-in-the-Fields Fund and the London Hospital), and a

28 LeMahieu characterizes the emphasis on expertise as part of the broader philosophy, influentially advocated by Reith and others, of ‘planning’, Culture for Democracy, 146.
30 BBC WAC, R6/282/1, Lists of Annual Appeals Results for National Appeals, 1928, 1933, 1938.
foregrounding of a traditional characterization of charity as linked to the institutions of family, warfare, and health economies.

The categorizations used by the Appeals Advisory Committee were themselves premised on a prior social philosophy of British charity. At its first meeting, committee members agreed that ‘appeals should be restricted to causes which concern themselves with the relief of distress, the preservation of life and health, and the amelioration of social conditions’.\footnote{BBC WAC, R7/51, Minutes of Meeting of Appeals Advisory Committee, 1 December 1927.} Having emphasized the practical bent of British voluntary activity, the directive went on to prioritize some groups of charities over others. Charities that were either implicitly or explicitly ideological were prohibited from making appeals, and included organizations that were associated with commerce (industry, print journalism, and new memorial funds) or religious creeds (missionary societies, denomination organizations, or animal charities).\footnote{Appeals Advisory Committee minutes, 1 December 1927. The guideline proscribing religious charities was issued to regional station directors: BBC WAC, R7/5/1, Appeals Policy 1928–45, Letter from Religious Director to all Regional and Station Directors and representatives at Bournemouth, Edinburgh, Swansea and Plymouth, 30 October 1929 Re, ‘Appeals in the Regional Scheme’.} The ‘privileged’ charities that were permitted an annual appeal (including the British Legion, St Martin-in-the-Fields Fund, Queen Alexandra Rose Day, and the Wireless for the Blind Fund), were joined from 1930 by charities that supported the entertainment industries for which the BBC had a particular sympathy.\footnote{BBC WAC, R7/5/1: Appeals Policy, 1928–45, ‘History of Broadcast Appeals, Prepared for a Meeting of BBC Board of Governors, 14 June 1945’.} There was an obvious prioritization here of the metropolitan (St Martin-in-the-Fields church was on Trafalgar Square, and the Queen Alexandra Rose Day fund supported London charities) and imperial causes (the British Legion and the Wireless for the Blind Fund founded by hero of the Boer War Captain Sir Beachcroft Towse). London and the empire were key signifiers of British national identity, of course, and the elevation of these charities points to the BBC’s self-conscious public fashioning of a British citizenry.\footnote{Sian Nicholas discusses the complexities underpinning the BBC’s formulations of national identity: ‘Keeping the News British: The BBC, British United Press and Reuters in the 1930s’, in M. Hampton and J. Wiener, eds, Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850–2000 (Basingstoke, 2007), 195–214; ‘From John Bull to John Citizen: Images of National Identity and Citizenship on the Wartime BBC, 1939–1945’, in R. Weight and A. Beach, eds, The Right to Belong: Citizenship and National Identity in Britain 1940–1960 (London, 1998), 36–58.} However, BBC employees recognized the difficulty in articulating what could be interpreted as an Anglo-centric model of citizenship outside Britain, and indeed England (as attested by the establishment of the Scottish Region Advisory Appeals Committee in the mid-1930s). As a note in a 1939 memo about charity appeals on the Empire Programme...
read: ‘Actually there is no real technical or timing difficulty in broadcasting appeals in the Empire Service. The real reason why we do not do so is generally speaking the charities are local to England so that it would not be fair to ask Empire listeners to contribute.’

Notwithstanding the attempts by BBC functionaries to draw the boundary lines of British charity, slippages in the discourse of ‘charitable’ between bureaucratised and popular understandings emerged. Correspondence between the two models is indicated in the success of hospital charity appeals throughout the period (which were themselves often metropolitan), such as the London Hospital, which raised £19,050 through its 1928 appeal, the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, and Royal Cancer Hospital, which raised £4,600 and £5,000, respectively, in 1929; the Queen Alexandra Hospital Home and Royal Savoy Association whose 1935 appeal raised £4,400, and the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases that received £11,588 in donations after its 1936 appeal.

However, discussions about other organizations, notably new scientific organizations such as the Industrial Health Education Society and the College of Pestology show divergence. In 1930, the Appeals Advisory Committee discussed these organizations as legitimately Good Causes, but they understood that it was fruitless commissioning appeals for these organizations because listeners would not regard them as ‘charitable’. Yet applicants for appeal slots continued into the mid-1930s to range far beyond the limits of the Committee’s constructed categories, comprising registered charities across proscribed sectors, vicars fundraising for damaged churches, and pleas from the unemployed. Underpinning the opposition to scientific organization, on the one hand, and the diversity of public understandings of charity on the other, was a complex matrix through which the public acquired knowledge about charity. The BBC’s Week’s Good Cause was one of a variety of cultural registers by which listeners could map the spatial and philosophical bases of civil society, and its social

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36 BBC WAC, R6/2, Appeals Advisory Committee Correspondence 1931–39, Minutes of Meeting 30 October 1935, suggestion made by Mr Castle.
37 BBC WAC, R7/18/1, Central Appeals Advisory Committee Minutes, 1927–39, File 1, Minutes of Meeting, 1 April 1930. The Industrial Health Education Society, which was founded in 1924 with the aim to educate shopfloor workers about occupational health, had the active support of government and Trade Unions, and variable support amongst industrial employers and medical professionals, A. Watterson, ‘Occupational Health Education in the British Workplace: Looking Backwards and Going Forwards? The Industrial Health Education Society at Work, 1922–40’, British Journal of Industrial Medicine, 47 (1990), 366–71. The College of Pestology grew out of the Society for the Destruction of Agricultural and Other Pests, which was largely concerned with the problem of rats. For a discussion of the College’s unsuccessful 1925 ‘rat week’ see British Medical Journal, 20 November 1926, 959.
codes. Late nineteenth-century social surveys such as Charles Booth’s Life and Labour of the People in London (1892–7) had disseminated an influential physical and discursive map of London charities, a texture that was embellished by W. T. Stead’s richly sensationalist journalism of the period. In the early twentieth century, this was augmented by a movement to coordinate and publicize information about nation-wide charity provision, spearheaded from 1919 onwards by bodies such as the National Council of Social Service. Looked at through this lens, the Week’s Good Cause appeals can be seen as a mechanism that contributed to mobilizing listeners to politicization in a broad term of an enlightened citizenship. Having a unique resonance through its aural form, the feature was one of a variety of mechanisms to which an engaged inter-war listening public had access to make informed decisions about charity.Listeners were not approaching BBC charity appeals from a perspective of ignorance. Rather, it was possible that many of those who donated to the Week’s Good Cause were already supporting charities on a regular or informal basis, or participating in voluntary activity through more direct means.

2. Victorian and Inter-war Philanthropies

Inter-war Britons were cognizant of a complex set of shifts in contemporary cultures of philanthropy between the Victorian and early twentieth-century worlds. There was no straightforward linear path between these two worlds. Rather, the routes were circular and sometimes uneven. There were inter-connections at the levels of institution, personnel, and philosophy. Many inter-war philanthropists, and many contemporary commentators, were shaped intellectually and in terms of social attitudes in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, and they drew on social networks that they had begun to forge in earlier periods of their lives. Certainly, there was no consensus in these years about disengagement from the legacy of the mid-to-late Victorian gift economy model of charity. But at the same time neither was ‘philanthropy’ a static language. Interventions such as social worker Elizabeth Macadam’s The New Philanthropy: A Study of the Relations Between the Statutory and Voluntary Social Services (1934) focused a series

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41 This analytical focus builds on the core argument in Mandler and Pedersen, After the Victorians, which we need to examine in depth the afterlife of Victorian moral impulses and sensibilities.
of debates about the changing patterns and methods of British voluntary action. A full study of the nature and timing of the subtle changes and shifts in philanthropic attitudes from the Victorian into the inter-war period still needs to be undertaken. This section offers a way into this subject by examining the Week’s Good Cause, a 1930s’ Talks series on state welfare and charity advertisements in BBC journalism as points from which to chart inter-war philanthropy’s distance from its Victorian antecedents.

The term ‘Good Cause’ provides a useful starting point for this analysis. Critically, a ‘Good Cause’ was one that all parties—BBC employees, external authorities, and the general public—perceived to be ‘deserving’. The articulation of deservingness as a criterion for social assistance can be traced to the principles of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act which instituted the Workhouse Test as the mechanism for distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving poor. However, the vocabulary of ‘deserving’ carried with it a moral and subjective freighting that sat in tension with the structural valuation of charity drawn by the Appeals Advisory Committee. In literature aimed at a popular audience, the inter-war BBC discussed the difficulties of demarcating deservingness. The Radio Times described the task of the Appeals Advisory Committee in 1935 as ‘choos[ing] between the ever-increasing hosts of the deserving’. Nevertheless, and as this indication of the ubiquity of its usage highlights, ‘deserving’ was clearly a critical concept. The one inter-war Good Cause appeal that survives in the BBC’s Sound archive includes a minute’s exposition (one-fifth of the total broadcast time) on the ‘deservingness’ of the cause. Broadcast in 1934 by stage actor and film star George Arliss on behalf of the Actors’ Benevolent Fund, the appeal characterized actors who signed up to the Fund as deserving of public support because they worked hard, were loyal and responsible, and did not have access to a dole. There were professional reasons why BBC personnel felt well-disposed to down-at-heel actors, of course. But the appeal’s narrative focused on generic notions of responsibility and respectability. Out-of-work actors, Arliss asserted, were positive and active citizens who had seen hard times, rather than scroungers who misused time and illegitimately received public benefits.

42 Quite how ‘new’ the inter-war ‘new philanthropy’ actually was, however, is questionable.
43 A. Digby, The Poor Law in Nineteenth Century England and Wales (London, 1982). Felix Driver observed the privileged place according to these classificatory principles in the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, Power and Pauperism: 1834–1884 (Cambridge, 1993), 72, 141.
In other forms of BBC-sponsored charity fundraising, the distance between Victorian and inter-war cultures of philanthropy seemed slight. Advertisements for charities in *The Listener*, the BBC’s weekly commentary magazine first published in 1929, showcased many nineteenth-century organizations. A survey of charity advertisements in the 1931, 1934, and 1938 issues of *The Listener* reveals that the majority of advertised charities had been founded in the mid-to-late Victorian period.\(^{46}\) Traditional tropes of imperialism, religion, and domesticity provided the framing structures of these charitable causes, and often the very explicit linguistic codes of their advertisements. For example, invoking the model of the stable nuclear family, a 1938 advertisement for the National Children’s Home informed readers that every boy and girl in its care had suffered ‘sad or tragic’ domestic circumstances.\(^{47}\) But these tropes were not only applied to charities established in the nineteenth century, they also underpinned appeals made by recently established charities. Thus, an advertisement in April 1934 for the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association (formed in 1924) stated the perhaps surprising fact that there were more lepers in the British Empire than in any other world domain, and called on readers to meet their imperial obligation in helping to eliminate the disease.\(^{48}\)

The institutions of family, empire, and religion encoded a recognizable landscape of British community life for early twentieth-century Britons. Indeed, in the inter-war years, these tropes continued to have cultural purchase as markers of civil society.

In other aspects of the inter-war BBC’s output, narratives of the traditional aspects of British social activism sat side-by-side with self-conscious claims to ‘progress’ and modernity. In the winter and spring of 1936, a cross-party group of academics, administrators, and social policy innovators broadcast a series of wireless talks about state welfare provision, the ‘Ways and Means’ talks. A. D. K. Owen of the inter-war policy think tank Political and Economic Planning (PEP) who spoke on ‘What are the Public Social Services?’ was joined in the talks by Ivor Thomas, Labour candidate and journalist at *The Times* (speaking on Housing), Paul Wilson of the London School of Economics (Health),

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\(^{46}\) Advertisements included the Florence Nightingale Hospital for Gentlewoman (founded in 1850); Shaftesbury Homes (to train boys for ‘definite trades’ and girls for a ‘domestic life’), and *Arethusa* Training Ship (which trained boys for the Royal and Merchant Navies, both founded in 1843); the Shaftesbury Society and Ragged School Union (founded in 1844); Spurgeon’s Orphan Homes (founded in 1867); the ‘Royal Alfred Aged Merchant and Seamen’s Institution’; the Imperial Cancer Fund (founded in 1902); Dr Barnardo’s Homes (begun in the late 1860s), Church Army for Fresh Air Homes; the National Children’s Home (founded in Lambeth, London in 1869); and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC which expanded from its London base in 1889 to become a national society).

\(^{47}\) *The Listener*, 12 January 1938, 57.

\(^{48}\) *The Listener*, 18 April 1934, 11.
R. C. Davison, (Unemployment), T. S. Simey, first Chairman of the Joint University Council’s Public Administration Committee (Public Assistance), and Ian Macdonald Horobin, Conservative politician and Warden of Mansfield House Settlement. Planned by the Adult Education Advisory Committee in conjunction with the National Council of Social Service, ‘Ways and Means’ fashioned contemporary public-administered welfare provision within the model of a second industrial revolution and a new welfare economy, developing the mid-to-late nineteenth-century public health reforms that mapped onto the first industrial revolution.⁴⁹ Yet even within this rhetorical emphasis on welfare evolution, many of the speakers retained the language of philanthropy for its range of associations and public resonance. So although Owen narrated the previous hundred years as dominated by shifting market forces and state structures, nevertheless he made voluntary action pivotal to his story, insisting that, ‘First of all I should like to point out that practically every public social service that exists today has its origins in a voluntary social service.’ ⁵⁰

The narrative of progress that underpinned the ‘Ways and Means’ series was further complicated through speakers’ references to continuingly feted historical actors. Owen characterized Victorian social reformers such as the seventh earl of Shaftesbury Robert Owen and Edwin Chadwick as embodying forwardness in thinking for recognizing the inevitability of state intervention for the purposes of welfare. His argument was put with an obviously presentist agenda. But the Whiggish back-projection in this characterization constructed a sense of prioritization of the state that Victorian actors themselves did not necessarily hold. Indeed, Shaftesbury—through his presidency of the voluntary Ragged School Union and his fronting of legislation for factory reform in the 1840s—would not have perceived conflict between voluntary and state social activism, any more than many inter-war social activists would. There was also an implicit gendering of the ‘progressive’ momentum in Owen’s discussion: the movement to ‘state’ activity was personified as masculine, seemingly neutering or emasculating a lively female tradition of voluntary social activism. Yet this narrative was in contrast to that which emerged in other inter-war BBC commissioned Talks, such as penal reformer and later BBC Governor Margery Fry’s 1933 discussion of national inheritances of British voluntary action, which celebrated the cross-gendered social

⁵⁰ BBC WAC, Scripts, ‘Ways and Means’.
and philosophical inheritances of historical luminaries including Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, Robert Owen, Florence Nightingale, Lord Lister, Lord Shaftesbury, and Sir Samuel Romilly. There was a distinction between Fry’s presentation of the pioneer of voluntary civil action as a continuing model, and Owen’s perspective on Shaftesbury as being pioneering in anticipating a key role for the state. Moreover, in locating these distinct emphases about the place of state- and voluntary-led social intervention, Owen and Fry constructed a broader competing narrative about welfare and modernity. While Owen conceived of the state as the inherently modern path, Fry presented voluntary action as providing the creative energy needed to stimulate social progress. Neither state nor voluntary welfare provision was privileged in either the Victorian or the inter-war periods, as these narratives illustrate. Rather, taken together they show the BBC to have facilitated spaces for creative debates about the character of British civil society between the wars, which was new in parts but which built on a vital and enduring Victorian heritage.

3. ‘Listener Identification’: Charity Fundraising and the New Psychology

Within the prevailing inheritance of inter-war philanthropy, a mechanism that was distanced radically from its Victorian antecedents was the relationship of charity fundraising to psychology. In addition to seeing new forms of mass communication, the inter-war period was also that in which new modes of psychological thinking had a huge impact on the cultural, political, and social life of the nation as scholars as diverse as Mathew Thomson, Nikolas Rose, and Anthony Giddens have attested. Thomson’s concept of the ‘psychological subject’ is particularly useful in suggesting a framework for thinking about how men and women internalized and responded to diverse cultural messages in modern Britain. Critiquing the dominance in the historiography of the modernist idea of the fractured self, Thomson argued that in inter-war Britain there existed a much more widely diffused notion of an integrated holistic self that connected the mind, body, ‘spirit’, and social

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52 The ‘experimental’ value of philanthropic effort was widely advanced between the wars, see e.g. C. Attlee, The Social Worker (London, 1920), 255; Braithwaite, Voluntary Citizen, 25; Macadam, New Philanthropy, 33.
dimensions of the person. But just as the modernist idea of the self, in so far as it existed, was not entirely ‘modern’—rather it was a post-Victorian, and partly anti-‘Victorian’ construct—so the alternative model of an integrated self, and its relationship to social improvement, had resonances with what had gone before. What was new between the wars was the need to fit the notion of an integrated holistic self with the evidence of a developing cultural economy of sales and advertisement which drew on new models of consciousness derived from studies of collective behaviour to prove that consumers were easily manipulated. How, then, might the notion of a malleable integrated self relate to, and indeed help to construct, the BBC’s charity appeals?

New psychological thinking ran through the inter-war BBC’s charity fundraising in the process of ‘listener identification’. My phrasing points to the fact that whilst winning the compassion and sympathy of an engaged public—which was the dominant mode of nineteenth-century forms of address—remained an integral part of the inter-war BBC’s charity appeals, by the inter-war period this process was part of an attempt to construct a sense of identification in which the listener or philanthropist was linked immediately to the broadcaster or cause. In part, this was achievable because of the way that wireless radio, particularly in its use in a domestic setting, confronted the emotions. ‘Listening in’ at home facilitated a process of engaged citizenship in which the substance of (previously distanced) social problems was brought directly into the everyday lives and habitations of British men and women. Dramatic devices of the Week’s Good Cause appeals were aimed primarily at achieving this domesticated process of identification; the drama of charity appeals was centred on establishing a personal connection between broadcaster and listener. This aim could be seen to sit in tension with the BBC’s institutional self-understanding as a public utility. As one employee put it in 1927:

I see plainly that it is possible to systematise charities too much, that the programme point of view has to be borne in mind, and that the question of the personality of the speaker and the human interest of

54 Thomson, Psychological Subjects, 13.
55 R. Rylance argues that in the mid- to late nineteenth-century psychology was ‘spaciously framed’ and addressed ‘crossing disciplinary interests’, Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850–1880 (Oxford, 2000), 7.
the cause may sometimes conflict with the principle of utility and efficiency.\footnote{57}

Nonetheless, BBC personnel agreed unanimously upon the value of the ‘personal broadcast’. In this philosophical context, appeals were always broadcast live because live broadcasts were thought to have an intimate, and more immediate, effect on listeners.

There were additional ways of securing even greater assurance of listeners’ attention. The BBC’s ‘Hints to Speakers’ stated that ‘[s]tories illustrating the human side of the work make a good groundwork for an appeal, with examples of the ‘constructive work’ of charities particularly interesting listeners.\footnote{58} This instruction to focus on the ‘human side of the work’ shows how the BBC saw the Good Cause as operating through an appeal to sympathy, empathy, identification, and emotion rather than to rational processes of decision-making. In part, this was related to the idea of an individualized appeal. In part, it suggests that appeals were conceived of as operating through specific emotive stimuli or triggers. The idea of the human interest of the cause also relates to broader debates between the wars about the nature of mass culture. Human interest journalism, which was coming to dominate the popular press in this period, was often associated with sensationalism or with a collapsing of the boundaries between public and private life.\footnote{59} However, in the Good Cause appeals the domain of human interest seems to be configured in a different way; the human interest of appeals was everyday, or at least a performed version of the everyday, rather than obviously sensational. Being sensitive to this nuance suggests that one of the driving motifs of inter-war mass culture was more contested and problematic than historians have recognized.

As the emphasis on the ‘personal broadcast’ underlined, both the process and practice of appeals were vital to their construction of human interest. But while Good Cause appeals eschewed sensationalism they nevertheless utilized celebrity.\footnote{60} In the BBC’s construction of popular culture the two could go together.

\footnote{57} BBC, WAC, R7/18/1, Central Appeals Advisory Committee Minutes, Memo from Mr Stobart to Appeals Advisory Committee, 15 September 1927.

\footnote{58} BBC WAC R7/18/1, ‘Hints to Speakers Appealing for Charitable Causes’.


\footnote{60} Celebrity, as C. Ponce de Leon has shown in an American context, was a critical function and feature of human interest journalism, Self-Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890–1940 (Chapel Hill; London, 2002).
Indeed, the burgeoning celebrity culture played a vital part in the construction of listener identification between the wars. Listener identification was not a straightforward process: whether because of disjuncture in class, gender, age, education, or indeed any other life experience, those who donated to the BBC Good Cause appeals would not necessarily have identified with the subject of an appeal. In fact, the process of identification was a mediated one, in which listeners established a vicarious relationship with the charitable constituency through what was constructed as an immediate connection with the famous man or woman presenting the appeal. Some celebrities had a more natural ‘microphone personality’ (in the *Radio Times* description) than others.61 But between the wars, Good Cause appeals were broadcast by individuals as diverse as actors, churchmen, judges, military and naval officers, politicians and statesmen, public intellectuals, and members of the Royal Family. This list illustrates the broad cultural basis of celebrity in these years, defined as much by long-established notions of social status as by the culture of Hollywood or sports personalities.62 In some instances, appeal broadcasters themselves became celebrities. This was the case for social scientist John Hilton, whose successful appeals for the British Social Hygiene Council were seen to be particularly impressive in overcoming popular perceptions that the organization was mainly propagandist.63 Even more noteworthy, Christopher Stone, who was employed by the BBC in 1927 as Britain’s first disc jockey, was the most sought-after name to broadcast appeals in the 1930s, and the appeals that he made were always in the top three revenue raisers.64 In part, the importance attached by both charities and the BBC to celebrity endorsement built on a much older tradition amongst charitable organizations that stressed the need for a ‘figurehead’ in order to frame their activities and fundraising within a personal dimension. Being sensitive to contemporaries’ recognition of the performative aspect of Good Cause appeals develops an argument made by historians such as Ross McKibbin that the BBC attempted to include a greater proportion of populist fare in its schedule in the 1930s.65 The drama of identification

63 The British Social Hygiene Council, which was both an investigative and a public health educative and propaganda body, had begun life in 1916 as the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases. Funded in the 1920s by central government, after 1929 it received stringent local government funds, see B. A. Towers, ‘Health Education Policy 1916–26, Venereal Disease and the Prophylaxis Dilemma’, *Medical History*, 24 (1980), 77–80.
was fundamental in securing listeners’ attention, and was part of the educative purpose of the BBC charity appeals, which bestowed a sincere moral purpose beyond either frivolity or hedonism. In the BBC’s Week’s Good Cause, education, information, and entertainment remained inter-connected.

Similar techniques to elicit audience identification for charitable causes suffused other aspects of the inter-war BBC’s output. Advertisements for charities in The Listener showed a shift in linguistic and visual devices in the 1930s towards a personalized tone. So whereas in 1931, adverts for the Arethusa Ship (founded by Lord Shaftesbury in 1874 to train boys for the Royal and Merchant Navies) took the form of sketch drawings of a boy and a navy ship alongside text that appealed for funding to find ‘the fine old training ship’ a new berthing site, in 1938 the adverts showed a photograph of a smiling boy next to text that began: ‘Remember John and his 1,200 poor brothers and sisters who are being maintained and trained to take part in the battle of life.’66 Similarly, adverts for the Anglican missionary society the Church Army’s Fresh Air Homes, which provided country holidays for mothers and children from deprived inner-city areas, developed from a 1931 appeal that used line-drawings and text in the third person to a 1938 appeal that centred a photograph of a young girl carrying a bucket and spade above the message: ‘This little girl and her mother live in a slum, but it isn’t quite as bad as it was now they have been to the sea for a fortnight.’67 The change in visual genre was especially revealing: photographs showed a personalized image (and analogously to the aural devices of radio media symbolized emotional confrontation) that was impossible to achieve through line drawings, and signalled an authenticity that was more likely to gain readers’ compassion and their identification. In a different context, a BBC Talks series in 1936 about public services focused on the fictional character of ‘John Smith’ to secure a similar imaginative engagement amongst its listeners. Although the character itself was criticized as one-dimensional, and was soon dropped, the foundational idea of drawing listeners in through response to an individual personality was powerful, and the principle remained in a refined form.

4. Connecting Culture and Civic Paradigms

In some ways, my claim to the cross-overs between inter-war cultures of charity and consumer culture might seem to be pushing at open doors. It has benefitted ‘Liberals’ to argue for the overlaps because of
their desire to dismantle the barriers between popular and elite culture; and it has suited a ‘Conservative’ rhetoric that constructs the BBC as the deadening hand of the state. However, there remains the task of opposing the contention that because the Week’s Good Cause was given only a five-minute slot on a Sunday it was marginal to the BBC’s broadcasting programme, and that because of this scheduling, the feature can be slotted into the BBC’s Sunday programming ‘controversies’, which were so roundly mocked in the popular press at the time as part of the critique of ‘Reithian Sunday’.68 The opposition between the paradigms of popular culture and civic values that underpins many histories of modern Britain may well have taken its cue from these critiques. In fact, even if, as Asa Briggs and Ross McKibbin claim, Sunday wireless listeners were tuning into the commercial Radios Luxembourg and Normandie rather than listening to the BBC’s religiously oriented programmes, it can be argued that they were at least tuning back in to listen to the 8.55 p.m. charity appeal slot.69 Veteran social investigator Seebom Rowntree wrote in his 1941 survey of York that Sunday wireless listeners habitually tuned back in to the BBC at 8 p.m. to listen to the religious broadcast, observing that ‘it is often customary to switch on to Luxembourg in the morning and leave it on all day, with perhaps a break in the evening for the religious service’.70 Rowntree’s identification of this listening pattern suggests that the wireless was facilitating a common culture of popular religiosity across educational, gender, and social groupings. Rowntree’s findings fit with the centrality of religion within the BBC’s founding ethos. Religious broadcasting was initially administered by the BBC’s Director of Education J. C. Stobart, but in July 1933 the appointment of Anglican minister and editor of the Church of England newspaper the Guardian F. A. Iremonger as Director of Religion gave it an administrative department in its own right.71 The Christian tone of the Week’s Good Cause was precisely implied to BBC advisors and employees in these years through its situation within the Religious Department, just as it was clearly indicated to wireless listeners through the broadcasting slot, which followed immediately on from the Sunday evening service. The Radio Times had emphasized the connection between the two features in

68 ‘Reithian Sunday’ referred to the BBC’s Sunday wireless programme that interspersed religious broadcasts, services, and music with periods of silence, through what was perceived to be a puritanical and self-regulating lens.
71 Bailey, ‘He Who Has Ears to Hear, Let Him Hear’.
the article which described the BBC as an almoner, noting that donating was ‘for those who feel that the passing of an offertory bag at the end of a service is a natural and proper sequence’.\textsuperscript{72} In a footnote in his book on the BBC and the Christian church, Kenneth Wolfe suggests that the \textit{Week's Good Cause} provided a counter to churchmen’s critiques of BBC religious services as detracting from the physical participation of religious activity. In the 1920s, Wolfe explains, the Sunday services were followed by an opportunity to respond to the feature: ‘Religion was not only hearing but doing; it was an appeal to listeners in general whatever their religious motivation.’\textsuperscript{73} Listeners could not help but pick up on the message that charitable giving was part of a Christian way of life. An inherent connection between Christian morality and national character was taken as given.\textsuperscript{74}

The BBC’s religious policy envisaged an inclusive form of Christianity in which moral and social sustenance could be provided to all, irrespective of specific theology. Wolfe describes this model as a ‘fundamental, non-denominational Christianity’, and Bailey characterizes it as an ecumenical form of Protestantism.\textsuperscript{75} This inclusiveness was a functioning part of the early BBC’s sincere Christian ministration, as advertised in Eric Gill’s ‘The Sower’, one of a series of sculptures commissioned in the early 1930s to adorn the new BBC building in London, Broadcasting House.\textsuperscript{76} At a specific level, the inter-war BBC’s observance of inter-denominationalism explains the philosophy underpinning the Appeals Advisory Committee’s proscription of appeals for charities of a narrowly evangelical or missionary character. Looked at more broadly, the \textit{Week's Good Cause} can be seen as part of a wide-ranging broadcasting mechanism that dramatically altered the way in which inter-war Britons could express their religiosity within the comfort of their own home, either individually or as part of a listening community. This process has continued to evolve within the BBC, from the television programme, \textit{Songs of Praise} (which remains

\textsuperscript{72} ‘The Week’s Good Cause’, \textit{Radio Times}, 30 December 1927, 710.


\textsuperscript{74} On the connection between morality and national character, see Grimley, \textit{Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England}.


\textsuperscript{76} ‘The Sower’, which is in the entrance of Broadcasting House, is depicted beneath a Latin inscription that translates as: ‘This Temple of the Arts and Muses is dedicated by the first Governors of Broadcasting in the year 1931, Sir John Reith being the Director General. It is their prayer that good seed sown may bring forth a good harvest, that all things hostile to peace or purity may be abolished from this house, and that the people, inclining their ear to whatsoever things are beautiful and honest and of good report, may tread the path of wisdom and uprightness.’
popular) to radio series such as Beyond Belief which seeks to ‘mediate between different faiths and between believers and non-believers’.  

Viewed though a political lens, the version of civil society that was constructed in the Week’s Good Cause might well have been part of the BBC’s strategy to secure official backing. Indeed, the Week’s Good Cause broadcasts can be seen to be exactly the sort of work of which the national government in the 1930s would have approved. The unprecedented unemployment that characterized these years prompted a re-evaluation of the relationship between state, market, and citizen in which a Conservative-dominated government viewed soaring state welfare spending as necessary, and yet which continued to be haunted by harrowing evidence of social deprivation, most palpably demonstrated in hunger marches. Together with developments in visual documentary forms, new aural mass communication was part of a new media economy through which the public could learn about and participate in civil society. Indeed, Schwartz argues that the Conservative association with civil society was in fact effected through its press and the BBC. The BBC projected emerging models and new understandings of both state- and voluntary-led public administration between the wars. So discussions about the increasing volume of state welfare provision in this period, notably pension reform (1925), and the institution of the Public Assistance Committees (1929) and Unemployment Assistance Boards (1934), featured frequently in the BBC ‘Talks’ series and its journalism. Indeed, the Week’s Good Cause appeals both reflected and refracted changing societal understandings of a well-ordered civic society, which were defined as much by pre-existing modes of philanthropic effort and voluntary action as by an increased arena for state welfare provision. Through its charity appeals, the BBC defined a version of civil society in which new social thinking sat alongside deeper-rooted models of voluntary action.

As well as complementing contemporary governmental impetus, the inter-war BBC’s sponsorship of charities shows how it also strategically navigated the boundaries of the commercial economy. Charity appeals in The Listener, such as those for the Arethusa Ship and Church Army Homes, were both juxtaposed to and mirrored those used in the magazine’s many advertisements for consumer goods and services. Aimed at the modern sophisticated reader, they functioned technically

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77 These are the words of former Head of Religion and Ethics at the BBC, Michael Wakelin: M. Bailey, ‘Media, Religion and Culture: An Interview with Michael Wakelin’, Journal of Media Practice, 11 (2010), 189.


in ways very comparable to those being developed in the commercial sector.\textsuperscript{80} In the Good Cause broadcasts themselves, the BBC employed critical devices used more widely in the emerging public relations industry, and hence conventionally associated by historians with modernity. But through framing this cultural interventionism as much by techniques that drew on the methods and philosophy of long-established notions of British philanthropy, the BBC blended the tenets of a new technologically driven culture with long-established models of British civil society. This cultural blending in turn may have played a larger part in framing commercially directed appeals than is generally acknowledged. Listeners and readers faced a range of demands on their income, time, and personal energies. The challenge of engaging their attention was both new and very old, and the techniques and the strategy employed were multivalent.

The relationship between civil society and the media has emerged as a key debate in the twenty-first century. A growing literature claims that the Internet and social networking structures are reconnecting civil society in a way that was previously impossible.\textsuperscript{81} This article has shown that there is a sizeable pre-history to this debate. While the range and speed of new media have expanded exponentially, there remain substantive similarities in the techniques used to establish connections between those who produced and those who consumed media. In the 1920s and 1930s, the BBC’s Week’s Good Cause appeals disseminated social thinking about civil society, and its institutional forms and spaces, and mediated an immediate identification between listener and broadcaster that mobilized audiences to social activism and to politicization in the broadest sense. The imperatives of an evolving consumer culture intersected with an evolving grammar of citizenship to re-articulate the forms and registers in which men and women understood their relationship to the state. The key protagonist of the emerging British public relations movement, Stephen Tallents, embodied this complexity. Appointed in 1935 as controller of the BBC’s public relations, Tallents would rise to Deputy Director-General and oversaw the early wartime development from the old BBC Empire Service to the new Overseas Service. As well as bringing to bear in this role a characteristically wide patronage of art and culture, one of Tallents’ driving motivations at the BBC was to increase engagement with civic society.\textsuperscript{82} Over-centralization of the state was not the desired

\textsuperscript{80} As LeMahieu has observed, elements of the newspaper industry opposed the creation of \textit{The Listener} for fear of its effect on the newspaper market: \textit{Culture for Democracy}, 149–50.

\textsuperscript{81} For a recent publication on this subject, see C. Shirky, \textit{Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age} (London, 2010).

end for Tallents and those close to him, but neither was a public relations model of ‘astro-turfing’, in which grass-roots behaviour was appropriated merely for strategic ends. As a resident of the Edwardian East End university settlement, Toynbee Hall (1907–9), Tallents had learnt that people (like himself) consumed charity whilst they participated in it. The two processes were in fact constructively and creatively linked. While historians of inter-war culture have tended to think about mass culture as part of a commercial motor for historical change, this article has suggested that we can think about it in a different way. Consumption and giving emerged as mutually reinforcing ethics in the inter-war BBC’s *Week’s Good Cause*. 