



Birmingham Senior Challenge Cup 1898-99

Winner: Aston Villa
Runner-up: Burslem Port Vale
No. of entries: 21

Just ten clubs - Brierley Hill Alliance, Dudley, Ironbridge, Kidderminster Harriers, Newport (Salop), Wellingborough St George's, Wellington St George's, Wellington Town, Wem, and Wrockwardine Wood participated in the qualifying competition, only one of which proceeded to the Competition Proper.

Clubs exempted from this process consisted of 4 First Division, 6 Second Division and Burton Wanderers of the Midland League.

Round 1 paired the 12 clubs in 6 ties, so that the quarter-final draw enabled two club to receive byes into the semi-finals and produced two local derbies. More than six thousand spectators at Muntz-street saw Small Heath held Aston Villa to a 2-2 draw, whilst half as many saw Villa easily win the replay. There was a totally unexpected scoreline at Stoney-lane saw West Bromwich Albion entertain Wolverhampton Wanderers. Although the Wanderers had already completed a Football League double over their arch-rivals that season, no one could have predicted a 7-0 victory for Wolverhampton, a scoreline which stands as the Baggies record home defeat!

Both Leicestershire teams were eliminated in round 1. Fosse lost 5-0 away at Burslem, whilst Loughborough were humiliated 11-0 at Wolverhampton.

Molineux staged both semi-finals. Although Wolves had home advantage they lost 1-2 to Aston Villa. The following week Burslem Port Vale and Walsall, both of the Second Division, played out a 1-1 draw. Another week on, this time at Stoney-lane, a snowstorm stopped the game after an hour with Burslem leading 2-0. During the stoppage several Walsall players had got changed, contrary to the referees' instructions, and when the storm stopped the players returned to the field in ordinary attire and smoking cigars. Perhaps not surprisingly the referee refused to restart the game and Walsall, the holders of the cup, were subsequently disqualified from the competition, paving the way for Burslem Port Vale to reach the final.

The final was scheduled to be played at Small Heath, but Burslem accepted a financial inducement to switch Aston Villa's Lower Grounds home. Burslem were energetic, tackled splendidly and seldom failed to make headway against the football League Champion. The game was evenly fought, with the only goal of the first half resulted from a cruel deflection by Stokes from a shot by Garratty. From that moment Villa took control and won the final 4-0.

Qualifying Competition

Qualifying Round 1

Date	Home	Away		Match Details
24.9.1898	Brierley Hill Alliance	2	1e	Kidderminster Harriers Cottage-street. 3,000 spectators.
24.9.1898	Ironbridge	W		Dudley Walkover for Ironbridge. Dudley scratched.
24.9.1898	Wellington St George's	2	1	Newport Vicarage-road.
24.9.1898	Wellington Town	2	6	Wrockwardine Wood
24.9.1898	Wem	W		Stourbridge

Qualifying Round 2

Date	Home	Away		Match Details
22.10.1898	Wellington St George's	5	0	Brierley Hill Alliance Vicarage Field.

Ironbridge, Wem, Wrockwardine Wood, byes.

Semi-Finals

Date	Home			Away	Match Details
12.11.1898	Wellington St George's	1	0	Ironbridge	Vicarage Field. c. 2,000 spectators
12.11.1898	Wrockwardine Wood	5	0	Wem	The Trench.

Final

Date	Home			Away	Match Details
26.11.1898	Wellington St George's	5	1	Wrockwardine Wood	

Wellington St George's qualified for the Competition Proper.

Competition Proper

Round 1

Date	Home			Away	Match Details
19.12.1898	Aston Villa Crabtree	1 (0)	1 (1)	Stoke Molyneux	Lower Aston Ground, Birmingham. Fine weather. Moderate gate.
19.12.1898	Burslem Port Vale	5	0	Leicester Fosse	Cobridge Athletic Grounds. 500 spectators.
19.12.1898	Burton Swifts Leigh Ashley	2	3	Walsall Martin Vail AN Other	Peel Croft, Burton. Wet weather. 500 spectators – approx. 250 travelled from Walsall on an excursion train. Walsall scored the winning goal 5 mins from time.
19.12.1898	West Bromwich Albion S Brett Bassett (2) Mock Hadley	5 (2)	0 (0)	Wellingborough St George's (winners of the qualifying competition)	Stoney-lane, West Bromwich. Poor gate. Albion played several reserves
19.12.1898	Wolverhampton Wanderers Blackett (3) McMain (2) Main Davies Miller (3) Norton	11 (5)	0 (0)	Loughborough	Molyneux grounds, Wolverhampton.

Burton Swifts and Burslem Port Vale, byes

Round1 Replay

Date	Home			Away	Match Details
9.1.1899	Stoke	1	2	Aston Villa	Victoria Grounds, Stoke. 7,500 spectators

Round 2

Date	Home			Away	Match Details
16.1.1899	Small Heath	2	2	Aston Villa	Muntz-street. 6,000 spectators.
18.1.1899	West Bromwich Albion	0 (0)	7 (5)	Wolverhampton Wanderers McMain Blackett Tonks (2) Beats (3)	Stoney-lane, West Bromwich. 2,474 spectators. Ground was heavy, weather uninviting and attendance was small.

Burton Swifts. Burslem Port Vale, byes.

Round 2 Replay

Date	Home	Away		Match Details
30.1.1899	Aston Villa	5 (4)	2 (00)	Small Heath At Aston. Fair attendance. c. 9,000 spectators.

Semi-Finals

Date	Home	Away		Match Details
6.3.1899	Wolverhampton Wanderers Platt	1	2	Aston Villa Wheldon (2) Molineux Grounds. 5,000 spectators. Villa played 5 reserve team players. Wolverhampton had several goals disallowed for offside. Wheldon's winning goal was scored from 30 yards.
13.3.1899	Burslem Port Vale			Walsall

Semi-Final Replay

Date	Home	Away		Match Details
18.3.1899	Burslem Port Vale	A	A	Walsall The match terminated in a fiasco. After Burslem had scored twice snow fell. There then remained about 23 minutes to play, and the referee stopped the game and ordered the men not to dress as the weather might clear. This it did in a few minutes, and the referee ordered the teams out again. Burslem promptly complied, but in the meantime the Walsall players had "changed," and for some time they refused to come out. Eventually, however, they came on the field their ordinary clothes, some in overcoats, and some smoking cigars. The referee declined to allow the game to proceed under such farcical conditions, and he stopped it. The Walsall team was reported to the Association for their conduct, which resulted in them being thrown out of the competition.

Final

Date	Home	Away		Match Details
27.3.1899	Aston Villa og Crabtree Wheldon Garratty	4 (1)	0 (0)	Burslem Port Vale Villa Park, Birmingham. 2,000 spectators

Notes

Aston Villa were crowned the First Division champions.

Loughborough were re-elected to maintain their status in the Second Division after finishing 18th (out of 19).

Match Reports

A selection of published match reports.

BIRMINGHAM CUP.

FIRST ROUND.

FOSSE V. BURSLEM PORT VALE.

Yesterday afternoon Fosse journeyed to Cobridge, to meet Burslem Port Vale, in the first round of the Birmingham Cup. This was the second occasion on which the Leicester team has appeared on the Pottery Ground this season, as on November 12th the Fosse gained the memorable League victory there by 2-0. In view of the Christmas engagements, the Fosse executive decided that it would be unwise to send their strongest team, and also were very anxious to give several men a well-earned rest.

Teams:—

Fosse: Howes, goal; backs, Parry and Jones; half-backs, Cassell, Robinson, and Lord; right wing, Galbraith and Coulson; centre, Keech; left wing, McMillan and Watkins.

Referee, Mr. Tillotson, Birmingham.

Burslem: Birchenough, goal; Hulme and McFarlane, backs; Boulemier, Beech, and Landera, half-backs; Evans, Beckett, Harvey, McDonald, and Heames, forwards.

The afternoon was dull, and the surroundings were a marvel of ugliness. The gate was very meagre. Vale won the toss, and began briskly, with the wind at their backs. Parry and Jones defended well, and Robinson, at half, was useful with his head. Vale did nearly all the pressing, and fifteen minutes from the start Beckett put in a long shot, which Howes flung out, but the leather rebounded off Harvey, who was following up, and went through, the Vale thus taking the lead. Fosse now ran up the field, but the Vale defence was sound. Five minutes later the home forwards were again sharply attacking, and from McDonald's centre Harvey, with a stinging

shot, scored a second goal for Vale. An unpleasant shower of rain now fell, making the ground and leather very slippery. Twenty-five minutes from the start Beckett headed through from a corner, after Howes had partially cleared, this making the Vale's third goal. Rain ceased, but the ground was very sodden. Fosse at last made headway, McMillan taking the leather up the field, and putting to Galbraith, whose centre yielded nothing. Fosse now showed up much better, McMillan, Galbraith, and Watkins being most prominent. The Vale, however, again pressed, and from a bully McDonald scored a fourth. Half-time:

VALE, four goals;

FOSSE, none.

Fosse showed up better after the restart, and kept the ball at the Vale end, but shots were limited. Then Heames got away on the Vale left, and looked like getting through, until Robinson grassed him, and Jones cleared. Fosse gained a barren corner. Mid then Vale quickly got to the other end, Howes saving from McDonald at the last moment. Play was more even than in the preceding half, but the conditions were miserable, sleet and rain again falling, followed by temporary hail storms. Twenty minutes passed without any score on either side. Beckett headed just over the bar from a well-placed kick by McFarlane. Robinson shot in nicely from centre-half, to save which Hulme gave a corner. This Galbraith put wide. Fosse forwards continued to show up better, and had more of the play. McMillan passed judiciously to his colleagues. After half an hour's play the Vale still retained their four to none lead. The last quarter of an hour was contested with utter absence of enthusiasm. Jones, at full back for Fosse, tackled well, and Robinson, at half, worked very hard. The game was of a straggling description. McMillan passed nicely to Watkins, but the latter was pulled up for off-side. McDonald put through at the other end, but was given off-side. Watkins then shot well, Birchenough saving. Galbraith shot wide. Harvey scored a fifth with a clever shot. Result:

**PORT VALE, five goals;
FOSSE, none.**

COMMENTS.

There were, yesterday, only four players in the Fosse team who figured in the memorable match, on Nov. 12th, when Vale were taken down on their own ground in the League by 2-0. Those four players were Jones, McMillan, Watkins, and Galbraith. With G. L. Bourdley, Swift, Walker, Ball, King, Brown, and Eaton away, chances of victory were not very definite. Had Fosse been fully represented a win—on the day's play should have resulted. But even had such been the case little financial gain to the club itself would have ensued. In the next round there is a bye, and after that the Birmingham Association, we understand, take the major portion of the gate receipts. With the League engagements taxing all the players' energy, it would be worth while considering the advisability of entering this particular cup another season.

On yesterday's play the Vale thoroughly deserved their win, but it should not have been by more than two to none. Howes, in goal, was again nervous. His chief mistake was his method of dealing with long, dropping shots. Instead of catching them first, and then throwing or kicking away, he essayed to fist them out (which should only be done in emergencies), with the result that the heavy, slippery ball refused to be fisted out, and easy chances were thus given the opposing forwards of scoring at close quarters. Of this they took practical advantage on two or three occasions. Howes in several matches this season has proved himself a first-rate keeper, and his poor form is only temporary. He has in him the making of a really good custodian, and it is bound to come out sooner or later. Jones performed very well at full-back, especially when one remembers that he is a half. His partner, Parry, did very fairly, but might with advantage be quicker on the ball. At centre-half Robinson—a coming player—performed excellently, always being on the go. H. Cassell and Lord worked hard. Of the forwards McMillan clearly showed the best football, and his passing at inside-left was very timely and judicious. The Vale forwards were smart, and they combined nicely. Their defence was never sorely troubled, but was sound. The gate was about £25.

On Monday Loughborough went to Wolverhampton, to play the Wanderers, in the Birmingham Cup competition. This was not the first time the clubs had met, the previous meeting being in the palmy Midland League days, when Loughborough made a draw of two goals at Wolverhampton. With the exception that Ball took the place of Ward at full back, the Loughborough team was the same as opposed Manchester City. The home team was the same as represented Wolverhampton at Burnley on Saturday, with the exception that R. Davies played centre forward in place of Beata. Blackett, a former Loughburian, played inside left, the full team being: Baddeley, goal; Matthias and H. Davies, backs; Nurse, Worton, and Fleming, half-backs; Tonks, McMain, R. Davies, Blackett, and Miller, forwards.

The attendance was very miserable, there only being a mere handful of spectators. It was soon evident that Loughborough would be heavily beaten. They showed very weak combination, and were entirely outclassed. The Wolves' attacks were sharp and sure, and though the Loughborough defence did their utmost, goals were piled on. Blackett scored twice, McMain twice and Miller once, before the interval, which came with the Wanderers leading by five goals to none.

The second portion was even more one-sided than the first. McMain added a sixth, Davis a seventh, Miller the eighth and ninth, Blackett the tenth, and Worton the eleventh, the whistle then sounding, with Loughborough beaten by eleven goals to none. The Wolves did practically as they liked in this half, Loughborough resigning themselves to the inevitable. Comment on the game is needless.

Melton Mowbray Mercury and Oakham and Uppingham News - 22 December 1898

MIDLAND NOTES.

[BY BRUM.]

THE BIRMINGHAM CUP.

THE time was when the final encounter for possession of the Birmingham Cup would have aroused the utmost enthusiasm amongst lovers of football; but this, along with other trophies, seems to have lost some of its charm, for there was only a moderate attendance to see the game between Burslem Port Vale and Aston Villa on Monday. As everyone expected, the Villa won, but they were a long time in getting their heads in front, and a bit of luck the other way in the earlier part of the match might have made a world of difference. As it was, the home players ran out winners by four goals to nothing. Up to a certain point the Burslem men played a capital game, being particularly clever at half-back, but when the Villa had notched their fourth point there was only one side in it. Directly after starting Johnson went lame, and for the rest of the match was a passenger at outside right, Athersmith going centre forward, a position in which he acquitted himself pretty well. A good many people wondered why Johnson turned out, being lame, but things came out all right, and the Villa now add the Birmingham Cup to the Staffordshire Cup, the Charity Cup, and —er, a half-share of the Sheriff's Shield. To complete the set all that is needed is the piece of League plate, and there are plenty of people who think they are sure to secure this.

Athletic News - 3 April 1899