



Public Record Office  
of Northern Ireland

# **INTRODUCTION**

# **IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION PAPERS**

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# Irish Football Association Papers (D4196)

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
History of the IFA .....	3
The Minute Books .....	4
Access .....	5

## Introduction



*Dromara Wanderers, taken at the Military Barracks, Derry Road, Omagh, when playing the Depot Team in the Mercer Cup final, 1931.*

The Irish Football Association collection comprises 43 volumes of minute books, 1880-1985, relating to the principal committees of the IFA, including the Council, International, Finance, Protests and Appeals, and Junior committees. The original minute book of 1880-1886 remains in the custody of the Irish Football Association in Windsor Avenue, Belfast.



## **History of the IFA**

The Irish Football Association was founded on 18 November 1880 at the Queen's Hotel, Belfast. At the invitation of Cliftonville Football Club, clubs in Belfast and District created a unifying constitution and set of rules, adhering to those laid down by the Scottish Football Association which had been formed seven years earlier in 1873. The aims of this embryonic organisation were to promote, foster and develop the game of football throughout Ireland.

The new association elected as its first President, Major Spencer Chichester and agreed to stage an annual Challenge Cup Competition which would later be known as 'The Irish Cup'. In the first ever cup final, Moyola Park (Castledawson, Co. Londonderry) defeated Cliftonville 1-0 in the 1880-1881 season. Originally based in Waring Street, the IFA moved headquarters first to Wellington Place and finally in 1960 to Windsor Avenue.

The IFA's first international match was against England at the Knock Ground, Bloomfield, in East Belfast in 1882. Ireland lost 13-0, but the gate receipts amounted to £9 19s 7d. International acclaim came when Northern Ireland qualified for the World Cup Finals in Sweden, 1958; Spain, 1982; and Mexico, 1986. Many Irish footballers have achieved international recognition including those of Peter Doherty, Danny Blanchflower, Pat Jennings, and George Best.

At present, the role of the Irish Football Association continues to promote the world's most popular sport alongside FIFA and the International Football Association Board of which the IFA, together with England, Scotland and Wales, is a constituent part.



## **The Minute Books**

The 43 well preserved minute books of the IFA, 1880-1985, provide a unique insight into all areas of soccer in Northern Ireland throughout the 20th century. They chart the history of organised soccer at club and international level during two world wars, partition and the 1982 World Cup campaign in Spain. The archive is of interest not only to the historian of sport, but also to those interested in the social fabric of Northern Ireland.



## **Access**

The archive is closed to the public, but permission to consult may be requested by contacting the Records Management, Cataloguing and Access Team, PRONI.

