THE BIRTH OF FOOTBALL IN EDINBURGH



from the world's first football club to the founding of Hearts and Hibs

EDINBURGH 900

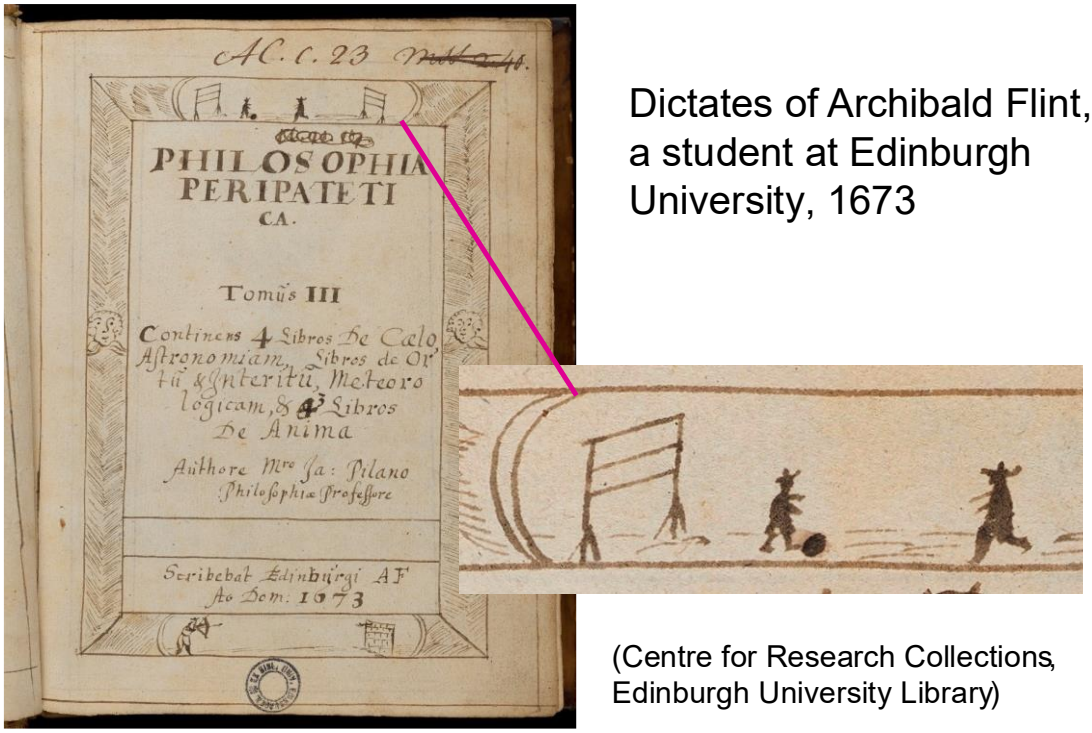
Talk by Andy Mitchell
Thursday 22 May 2025, at City Art Centre, Edinburgh

This is quite the year for football anniversaries in Edinburgh: Hearts have just finished their 150th season, Hibs are about to begin theirs, and both clubs are rightly celebrating their rich histories.

But if you think football in Edinburgh started with those two clubs in the 1870s, think again. Today's talk is all about how we got to that stage, and there is a lot to say as the city's first football club was founded fully fifty years before Hearts and Hibs, and there is evidence football was played here in the 17th century.

But for a long time football - as we know it - lived a shadowy existence, notably struggling against rugby dominance. However, the story has a happy ending, as the belated arrival of association football in Edinburgh kick-started the rapid growth that included the formation of our two great rivals.

Earliest known illustration of football in Scotland



Dictates of Archibald Flint, a student at Edinburgh University, 1673

(Centre for Research Collections, Edinburgh University Library)

To demonstrate just how deep Edinburgh's football heritage runs, football has been played in the city since medieval times, and it has been a popular game at school and university for hundreds of years.

Let's go back 350 years. A bored Edinburgh University student called Archibald Flint drew some doodles in the margins of his course notes, and that is how, in 1673, he created Scotland's earliest known illustration of football. Just a couple of players, with oversized hats and rather quirky goalposts, but unmistakably football.

He also drew pictures of other sports: archery, billiards and tennis, so clearly Flint was an active type.

Edinburgh's sporting 'world firsts'

Archery:
first club (1676, Royal Company of Archers)

Golf:
first club (1735, Burgess Golfing Society)
first rules (1744, Company of Gentlemen Golfers)
first trophy (1744, Edinburgh Silver Club)

Bowls:
first rules (1769, Edinburgh Society of Bowlers)
first trophy (1771, Edinburgh Silver Jack)

Gymnastics:
first multi-sport club and trophy (1786, Gymnastic Club)

Curling:
first rules (1811, Duddingston)
first national association of clubs (1838, Caledonian Curling Club)

Archibald Flint wasn't the only sporty type, and it's fair to say there was a lot of sport going on. Edinburgh was something of a sporting hotbed in the age of enlightenment, when the city was a place of innovation and organisation. In the 18th century, some of the world's first sports clubs were formed here, and they organised some of the world's first competitions. For competitions you need a common understanding of how to determine a winner, so the earliest known rules soon followed on.

There were clubs for archery, golf, bowls, gymnastics and curling, so the city built up a wealth of experience and expertise in forming and running sporting organisations and competitions.

However these were largely recreations for older affluent men who had time and money. They didn't involve too much exertion and that's why football was a latecomer to the party, at least as far as adults were concerned.

Early enthusiasm for football – school and university

- *"We, the lads of the College, used to play at football on the grounds now covered by buildings."* Henry Mackenzie, student at Edinburgh University in the 1760s.

- *"In due time I came to play ball in the College, instead of the High School Yards; yet I neglected not my studies."* 'A Plain Man' writing about the late 18th century.

- *"The games which had been handed down to us unchanged from one generation to another … football was then a first-rate game, though there was neither hacking, nor mauls, nor touching down to put life and limb in danger."*Sir Robert Christison, reminiscing about his High School days, 1805-11.

- *"And life is itself but a game at football."*Sir Walter Scott, writing in 1815.

Primarily, football was a game for schoolboys and students. It was played in the yards at the Royal High School, where the boys were encouraged to run around and be active, and some students at the university also found the time to play the game. These are some quotes from men who were involved:

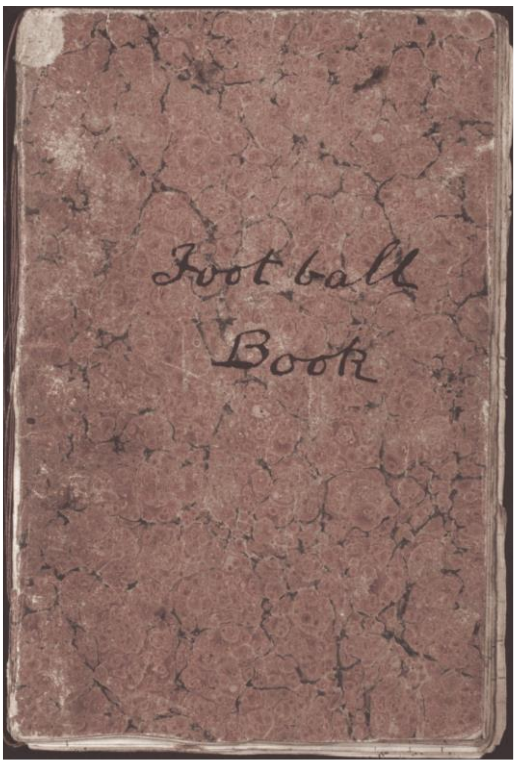
Henry Mackenzie, a student in the 1760s, talked of playing football at Lady Nicolson's Park, which is now Nicolson Square on the south side.

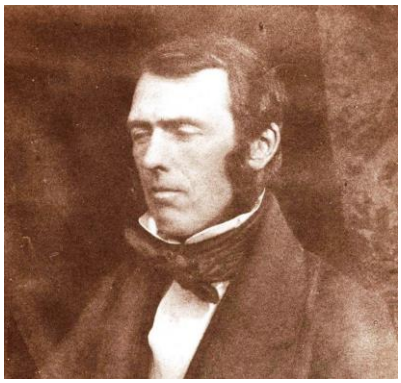
An anonymous correspondent to the *Scots Magazine* in 1824, wrote of playing football at the High School and then as a student.

Sir Robert Christison, a famous surgeon, reminisced about his football days at the High School.

And most famously a comment from Sir Walter Scott, another High School boy.

The Foot-Ball Club, founded in Edinburgh, 1824





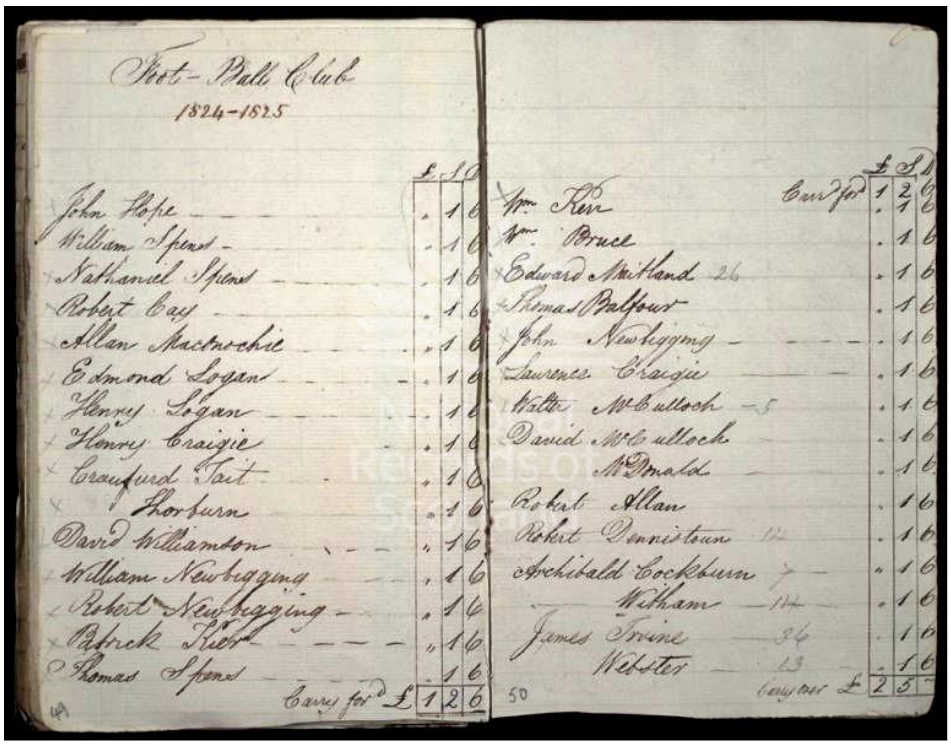
Founded by John Hope, the world's first club dedicated to playing football.

The Foot-Ball Club papers include detailed accounts, membership lists, letters and even a set of fledgling rules.

The big step forward came in the 1820s when young men took the game out of the playground and into adulthood. 200 years ago the world's first club devoted to the sport of football was founded here in December 1824 by John Hope, a 17 year old law student who wanted to carry on the game he had played at school. He was a lifelong exponent of football, and is a man we will be hearing of several times in the course of this afternoon.

He called his new club simply The Foot-Ball Club because it was the first and only one, and we know plenty about it because John Hope was not just an obsessive organiser who wrote everything down, he was an obsessive hoarder who kept everything. His papers are now in the National Records of Scotland.

Foot-Ball Club membership list, first season: 1824-25


Foot-Ball Club
1824-1825

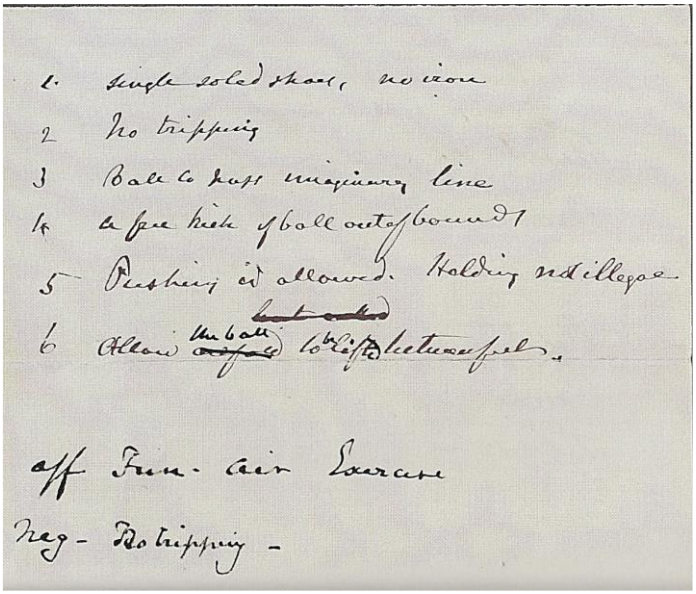
(National Records of Scotland)

John Hope found plenty of like-minded individuals and their names are all written neatly in his notebooks against their subscriptions. They paid a shilling and sixpence each to join, and the club met once or twice a week all year round.

The members were the cream of young male Edinburgh society – lawyers, doctors and an array of businessmen, accountants, bankers and soldiers. By the time the club came to an end in 1841, over 300 men had been recorded as members, demonstrating just how popular football was for those who had the time and money to play it.

John Hope's football rules – the world's first – written in 1833

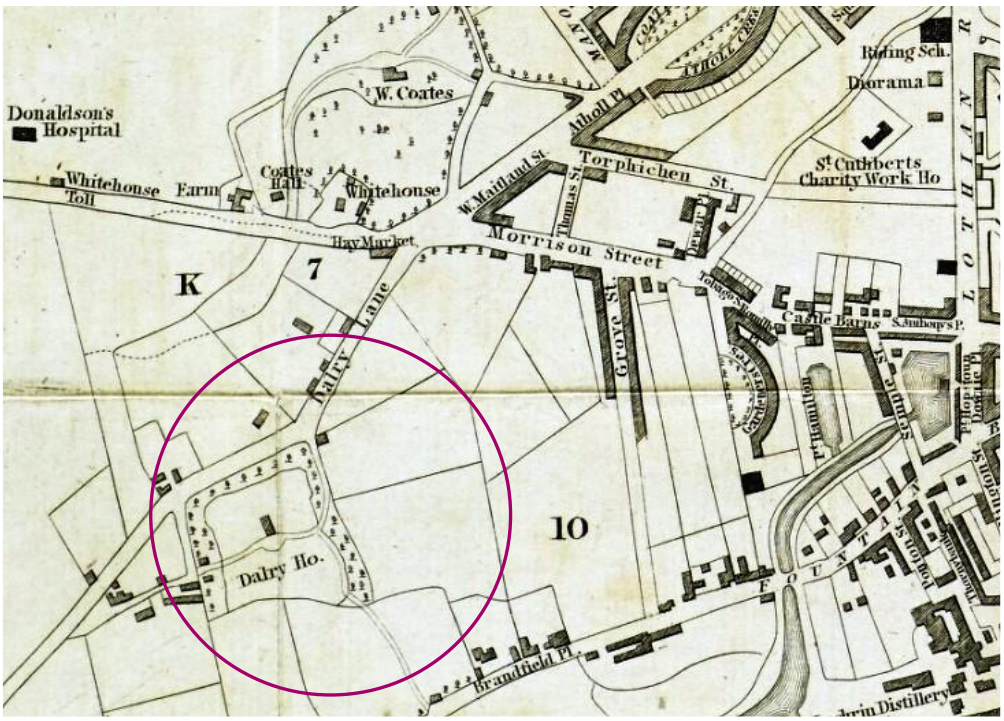
1 Single soled shoes, no iron
2 No tripping
3 Ball to pass imaginary line
4 A free kick if ball out of bounds
5 Pushing is allowed. Holding not illegal
6 Allow the ball to be lifted between fields



How did they play? These handwritten rules from 1833 are the best indication we have that John Hope's club played a kicking game where handling and rough play were forbidden, and goals were scored by kicking the ball between the posts – so perhaps not so far removed from association football.

The formation of the Foot-Ball Club and the writing of those rules join the series of innovative world firsts for Edinburgh in those other sports I mentioned earlier.

The Foot-Ball Club’s first field, in Dalry



However, while the Foot-Ball Club met a need, it was also exclusive, only open to those of a certain social standing who had the time for recreation and could afford to pay for it.

The only reason the club was able to play was because John Hope took on the rental of a farmer’s field at Dalry, commissioned equipment like handmade leather balls and bladders, then recouped the expense through subscriptions.

Football in Edinburgh was part of everyday city life

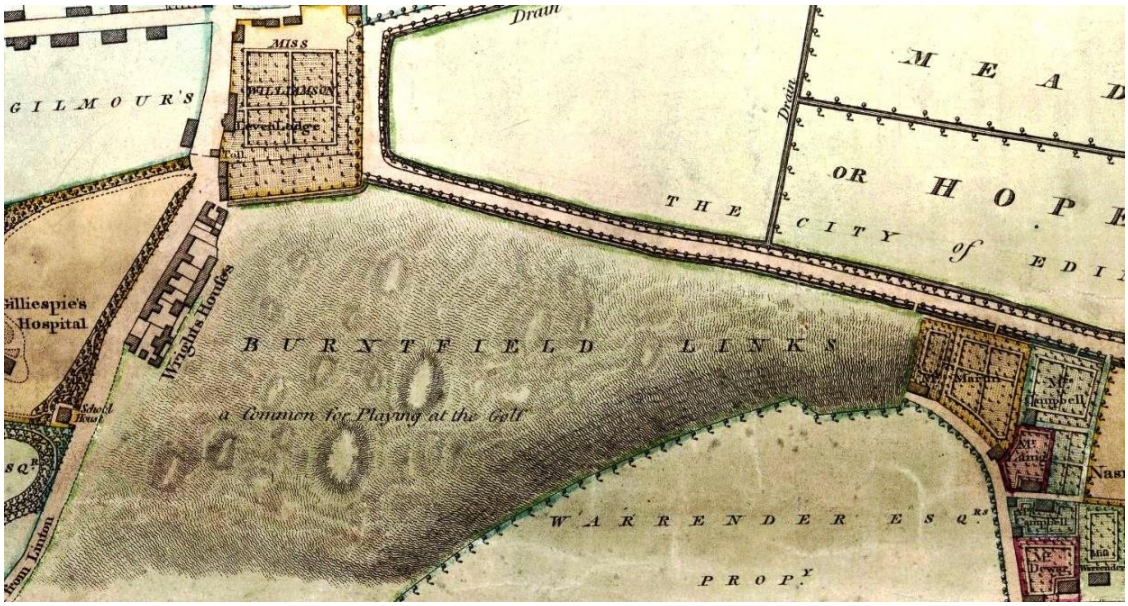


View from Calton Hill (Macgill & Schenck's Panorama of Edinburgh, 1841)

By the 1840s we have something of a paradox. Football was part of everyday life as this engraving on Calton Hill indicates, but the Foot-Ball Club had foundered, the schools had not yet taken it up on an organised basis, and for the mass of population, there were three significant barriers: time, space and money.

For starters, where would they find the time? John Hope and the lawyers could take Wednesday afternoons off, but the working classes worked long hours for six days a week and in presbyterian Scotland there was little prospect of playing any sport on the seventh day, so the only possibility was summer evenings.

Public spaces available for sport (1): Bruntsfield Links



John Ainslie's map of Edinburgh, 1804 (NLS)

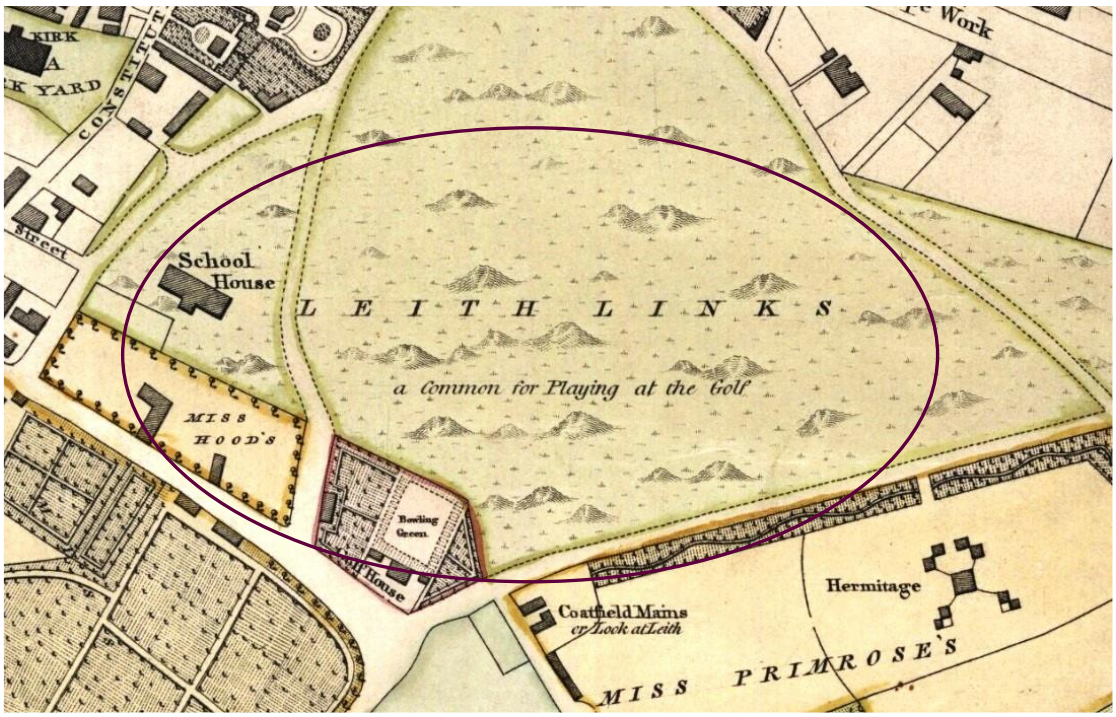
Where could they play? The old town was built up with virtually no room for recreation, while any new open spaces, such as the New Town gardens, were for residents only and access was strictly controlled. Police regulations forbid playing football in the street.

Edinburgh had very limited public space available – essentially just Holyrood Park, Bruntsfield Links and Leith Links – and there was great competition for that space from other sports and activities.

Bruntsfield Links is marked on this map as 'A Common for Playing at the Golf', and was considerably rougher and bumpier than it is today.

As you can see, the neighbouring fields were privately owned, and in a rapidly growing city, they were generally used for grazing cattle or sheep until they were swallowed up by housing.

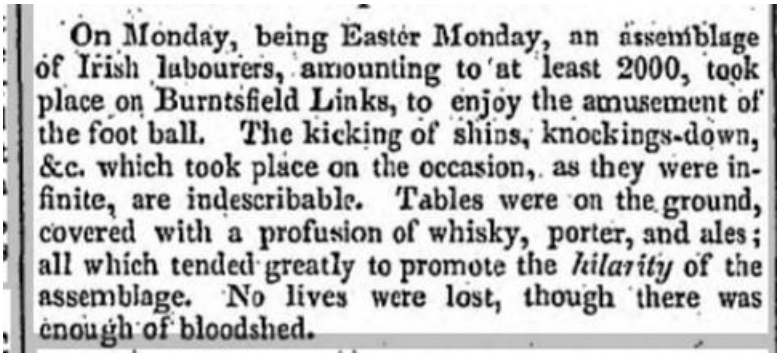
Public spaces available for sport (2): Leith Links



The same goes for Leith Links, also ‘A Common for Playing at the Golf’, with little hillocks scattered around. The only flat space is a bowling green at one side, where the old Leith Academy was later built.

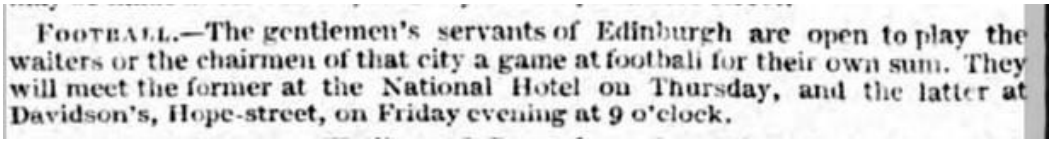
There was just one private sports ground, Sparks Ground in Grove Street which opened in the 1830s, and although it was used by the Foot-Ball Club in its twilight years it was primarily for cricket. And of course the owner charged for use.

Who else played football in Edinburgh?



On Monday, being Easter Monday, an assemblage of Irish labourers, amounting to at least 2000, took place on Burntsfield Links, to enjoy the amusement of the foot ball. The kicking of shins, knockings-down, &c. which took place on the occasion, as they were infinite, are indescribable. Tables were on the ground, covered with a profusion of whisky, porter, and ales; all which tended greatly to promote the *hilarity* of the assemblage. No lives were lost, though there was enough of bloodshed.

April 1826 – over 2,000 Irish labourers on Bruntsfield Links



FOOTBALL.—The gentlemen's servants of Edinburgh are open to play the waiters or the chairmen of that city a game at football for their own sum. They will meet the former at the National Hotel on Thursday, and the latter at Davidson's, Hope-street, on Friday evening at 9 o'clock.

April 1841 – Gentlemen's servants issue a challenge

After time and space, the third barrier was money. Sport, except in its most rudimentary forms, was simply beyond the reach of the mass of population.

John Hope and his club members had the money to rent a private field, they could afford to damage or dirty their clothing in the course of playing, and they could pay for expensive equipment such as balls.

But the latent demand for sport was certainly there. Year after year, there are reports of Irish labourers using a rare day off to play football and get drunk, taking over Bruntsfield Links. You might wonder why there were 2,000 Irish labourers in Edinburgh at all but that was down to major construction projects like the New Town and Union Canal.

And there are occasional other mentions of people playing football, such as the gentlemen's servants issuing a challenge in 1841 to the city's waiters or the chairmen (that's men who carried sedan chairs). Whether, or where, they actually played is not recorded.

So football in Edinburgh, on the whole, was an occasional event rather than a regular pastime. That started to change in the 1850s, when there were a number of developments, on and off the field, which gave football a new impetus.

The world's first known football prize: the 1851 silver medal





Edinburgh University Foot Ball Club v the 93rd Regiment at Holyrood Park

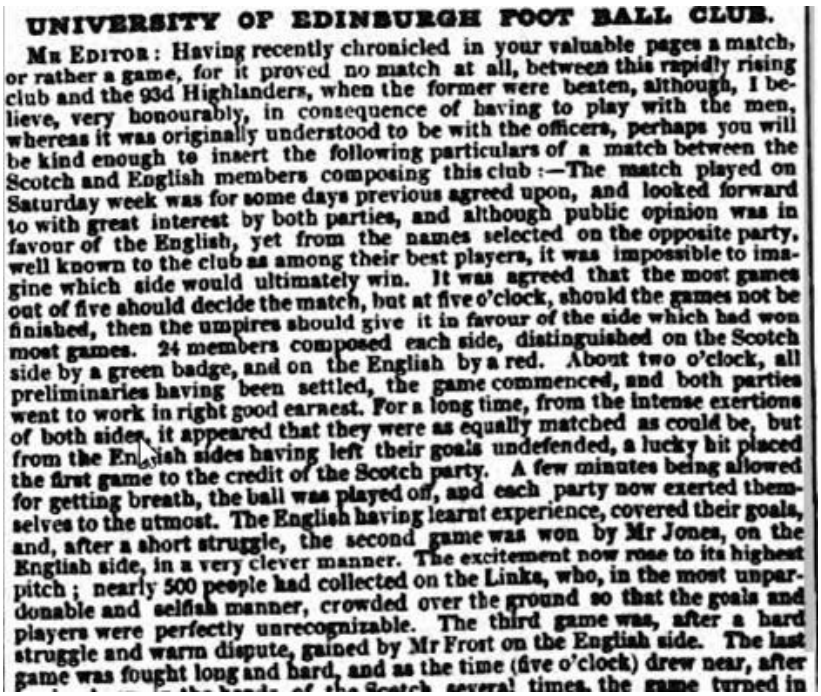
(Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders Museum, Stirling Castle)

The decade began with a series of Edinburgh University football matches in 1851. Curiously they didn't rate a mention in the local papers, and we might not have known about them, but someone wrote reports for *Bell's Life*, a London sports paper, so they actually reached a wide readership.

It started in January when the 93rd Highlanders, who were garrisoned at the Castle, were challenged by the students of the Edinburgh University Foot Ball Club, to a match in Holyrood Park, with the losers to provide the winners with a silver medal. The Highlanders won 3-2 and the medal survives to this day in the regimental museum at Stirling Castle, beautifully engraved with match action on one side and a detailed inscription on the other.

This is another world first for Edinburgh – the first known prize for winning a football match, years before the English got in on the act with the Youdan Cup in Sheffield and then the FA Cup.

Edinburgh University football club, March 1851



UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH FOOT BALL CLUB.

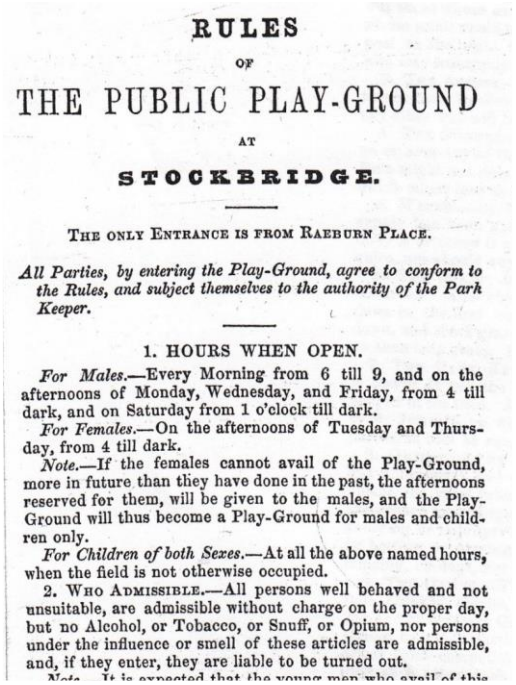
Mr Editor: Having recently chronicled in your valuable pages a match, or rather a game, for it proved no match at all, between this rapidly rising club and the 93d Highlanders, when the former were beaten, although, I believe, very honourably, in consequence of having to play with the men, whereas it was originally understood to be with the officers, perhaps you will be kind enough to insert the following particulars of a match between the Scotch and English members composing this club:—The match played on Saturday week was for some days previous agreed upon, and looked forward to with great interest by both parties, and although public opinion was in favour of the English, yet from the names selected on the opposite party, well known to the club as among their best players, it was impossible to imagine which side would ultimately win. It was agreed that the most games out of five should decide the match, but at five o'clock, should the games not be finished, then the umpires should give it in favour of the side which had won most games. 24 members composed each side, distinguished on the Scotch side by a green badge, and on the English by a red. About two o'clock, all preliminaries having been settled, the game commenced, and both parties went to work in right good earnest. For a long time, from the intense exertions of both sides, it appeared that they were as equally matched as could be, but from the English sides having left their goals undefended, a lucky hit placed the first game to the credit of the Scotch party. A few minutes being allowed for getting breath, the ball was played off, and each party now exerted themselves to the utmost. The English having learnt experience, covered their goals, and, after a short struggle, the second game was won by Mr Jones, on the English side, in a very clever manner. The excitement now rose to its highest pitch; nearly 500 people had collected on the Links, who, in the most unpardonable and selfish manner, crowded over the ground so that the goals and players were perfectly unrecognizable. The third game was, after a hard struggle and warm dispute, gained by Mr Frost on the English side. The last game was fought long and hard, and as the time (five o'clock) drew near, after

‘Scotland v England’ with 500 spectators on Leith Links

The match was not a one-off, as in March 1851 the University club staged a ‘Scotland v England’ encounter on Leith Links, attracting a crowd of 500 spectators. This event is significant, not just because it is the first known international football match of any description in any code, but also because the diverse origins of the student players from around the country (eg Cheshire, Suffolk and Hampshire as well as around Scotland) showed that football had a wide geographical spread and it was possible for them to come together to play a commonly accepted code.

It was 24-a-side but the type of football they played was a kicking rather than a handling game. It was clear that this was a club which met, played and practised on a regular basis at that time, and that they had tactical awareness.

John Hope's Stockbridge Playground, 1854



RULES

OF

THE PUBLIC PLAY-GROUND

AT

STOCKBRIDGE.

THE ONLY ENTRANCE IS FROM RAEBURN PLACE.

All Parties, by entering the Play-Ground, agree to conform to the Rules, and subject themselves to the authority of the Park Keeper.

1. HOURS WHEN OPEN.

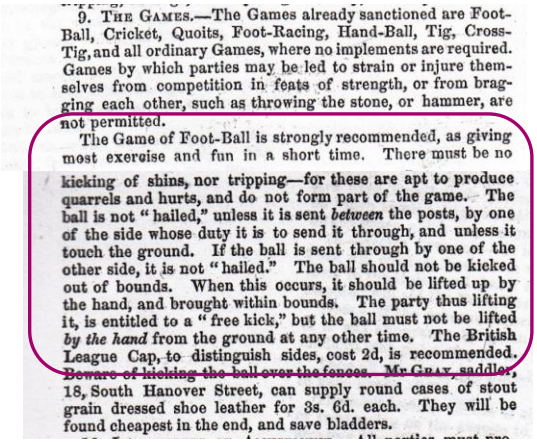
For Males.—Every Morning from 6 till 9, and on the afternoons of Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 4 till dark, and on Saturday from 1 o'clock till dark.

For Females.—On the afternoons of Tuesday and Thursday, from 4 till dark.

Note.—If the females cannot avail of the Play-Ground, more in future than they have done in the past, the afternoons reserved for them, will be given to the males, and the Play-Ground will thus become a Play-Ground for males and children only.

For Children of both Sexes.—At all the above named hours, when the field is not otherwise occupied.

2. WHO ADMISSIBLE.—All persons well behaved and not unsuitable, are admissible without charge on the proper day, but no Alcohol, or Tobacco, or Snuff, or Opium, nor persons under the influence or smell of these articles are admissible, and, if they enter, they are liable to be turned out.



9. THE GAMES.—The Games already sanctioned are Foot-Ball, Cricket, Quoits, Foot-Racing, Hand-Ball, Tig, Cross-Tig, and all ordinary Games, where no implements are required. Games by which parties may be led to strain or injure themselves from competition in feats of strength, or from bragging each other, such as throwing the stone, or hammer, are not permitted.

The Game of Foot-Ball is strongly recommended, as giving most exercise and fun in a short time. There must be no kicking of shins, nor tripping—for these are apt to produce quarrels and hurts, and do not form part of the game. The ball is not "hailed," unless it is sent *between* the posts, by one of the side whose duty it is to send it through, and unless it touch the ground. If the ball is sent through by one of the other side, it is not "hailed." The ball should not be kicked out of bounds. When this occurs, it should be lifted up by the hand, and brought within bounds. The party thus lifting it, is entitled to a "free kick," but the ball must not be lifted *by the hand* from the ground at any other time. The British League Cap, to distinguish sides, cost 2d, is recommended. Beware of kicking the ball over the fences. MR GRAY, saddler, 18, South Hanover Street, can supply round cases of stout grain dressed shoe leather for 3s. 6d. each. They will be found cheapest in the end, and save bladders.

(National Records of Scotland)

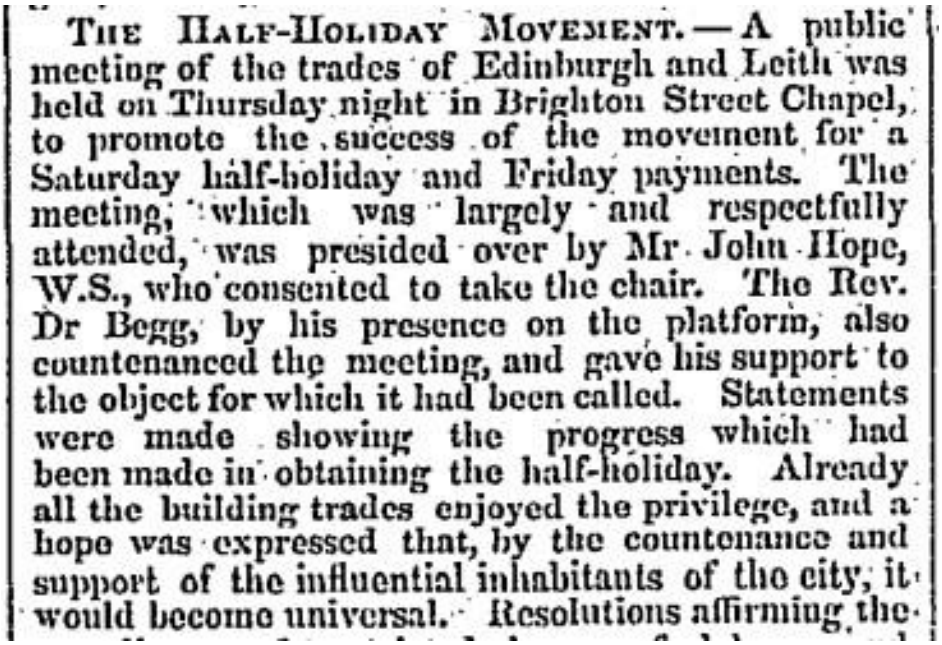
Another significant event took place in 1854 when John Hope – founder of the Foot-Ball Club thirty years earlier – funded the Stockbridge Play Ground, the park which is today occupied by the Grange Cricket Club. Hope wanted to give an opportunity to young boys and girls to play sport, and that specifically included football. Sadly his Stockbridge venture only lasted a year as the landlord refused to renew the lease, but it was popular and clearly demonstrated a demand.

However, what is particularly interesting is that John Hope printed up a booklet with the rules of football as he thought it should be played: no kicking of shins or tripping; goals are scored by sending the ball between the posts; no handling or carrying of the ball. Basically, these are all the fundamentals of what we would understand as association football.

By a quirk of fate, right next door to John Hope's park, another sports ground opened the very same week - the Edinburgh Academy's field, known as Raeburn Place, which was Scotland's first private school sports ground.

This created the template for the introduction of organised sport, including rugby football, at schools in Edinburgh. They had private grounds, and used sport as a means of teaching team spirit, good conduct and manliness. So that gave rugby a major platform for growth while the kicking game remained in the shadows.

The Saturday half holiday, introduced 1850s



THE HALF-HOLIDAY MOVEMENT.—A public meeting of the trades of Edinburgh and Leith was held on Thursday night in Brighton Street Chapel, to promote the success of the movement for a Saturday half-holiday and Friday payments. The meeting, which was largely and respectfully attended, was presided over by Mr John Hope, W.S., who consented to take the chair. The Rev. Dr Begg, by his presence on the platform, also countenanced the meeting, and gave his support to the object for which it had been called. Statements were made showing the progress which had been made in obtaining the half-holiday. Already all the building trades enjoyed the privilege, and a hope was expressed that, by the countenance and support of the influential inhabitants of the city, it would become universal. Resolutions affirming the

The Scotsman, 22 October 1853

Meanwhile, other things were happening in wider society that would have a significant impact on football's future.

The first important change of the 1850s was the introduction of half-holidays on Saturday for many workers, thanks to a movement led by those who campaigned for better working conditions. And who chaired this meeting in 1853? None other than that man John Hope, again.

The half-holiday movement created – for the very first time – regular, dependable leisure time for the working classes. Those few hours on a Saturday afternoon revolutionised life for many and created the first generation with a significant amount of free time. How they filled that precious time opened up all sorts of possibilities: some just went to the pub, although the temperance movement lobbied hard against that by encouraging them to do something more healthy: go walking, get an education - or play sport.

Crucially, working men now had the time to play football, and what is more, it was becoming affordable. The march of technology meant that balls could be inflated with india rubber bladders, which were much cheaper and considerably more robust than the old pig bladders.

That still left the issue of somewhere to play, and the breakthrough came in 1855.

The Meadows, laid out for recreation in 1855



The winning design created by Thomas Davies

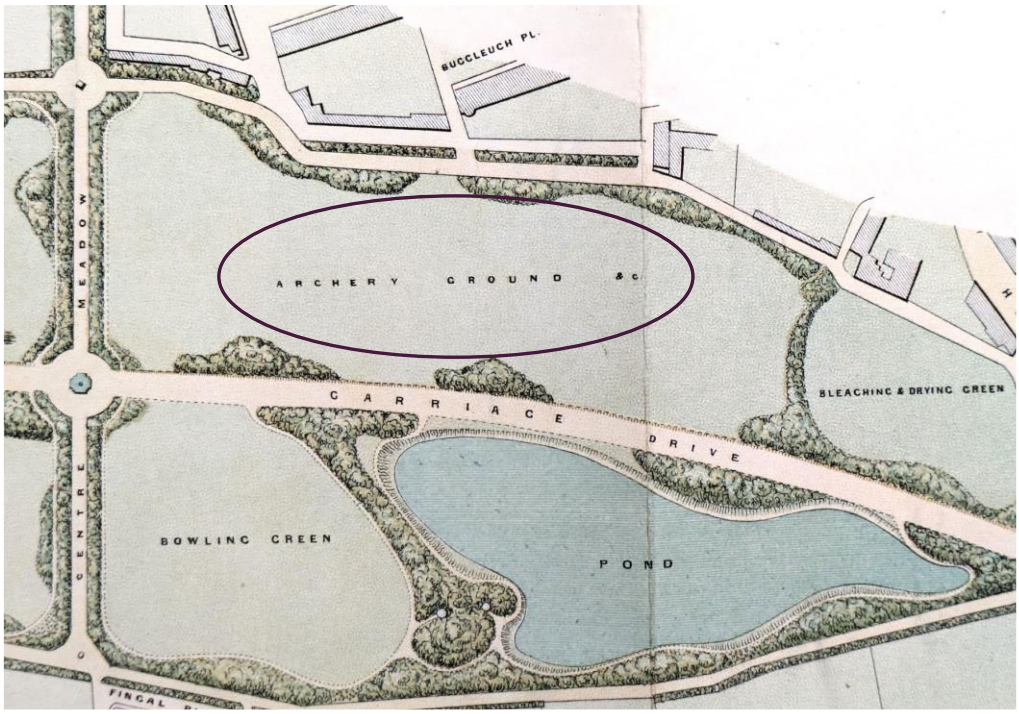
That was the year when the Meadows were made available to the citizens of Edinburgh for recreation.

The story of the Meadows is long and interesting: much of it was originally the Borough Loch, which was drained in the 18th century, then from the 1820s it was rented out by the Council.

You could walk through the Meadows, north-south along Middle Meadow Walk which was then a kind of raised causeway, but the land was fenced off to the west for grazing sheep and cows, and used for bleaching cloth to the east, apart from a small area where the Royal Archers had a historic right of access.

But in a remarkable act of public improvement, the Council decided in 1855 to open the Meadows as a public park, which meant removing the barriers and giving up their income from grazing livestock. They held a competition to design this new park and the winning entry was put forward by Thomas Davies, a promising city architect.

Thomas Davies' proposal for the East Meadows

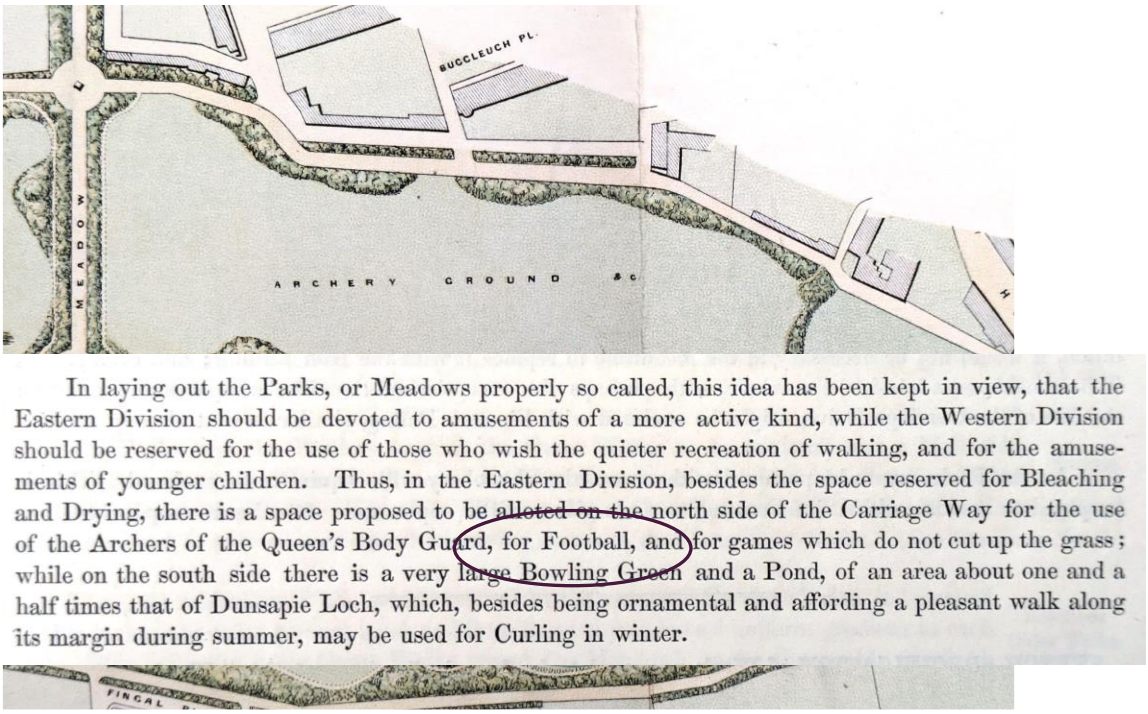


Archery Ground etc. Bowling Green. Curling Pond.

Davies published his plan in triumph, and included a fold-out map which is particularly interesting for what it reveals about his proposed usage of the land. This shows the East Meadows, where the larger upper section is marked as 'Archery Ground etcetera', with a Bowling Green and a Pond to the south.

To find out what the 'etcetera' meant, let's have a look at his detailed description in the text.

The Meadows, laid out for Football!



In laying out the Parks, or Meadows properly so called, this idea has been kept in view, that the Eastern Division should be devoted to amusements of a more active kind, while the Western Division should be reserved for the use of those who wish the quieter recreation of walking, and for the amusements of younger children. Thus, in the Eastern Division, besides the space reserved for Bleaching and Drying, there is a space proposed to be alloted on the north side of the Carriage Way for the use of the Archers of the Queen's Body Guard, for Football, and for games which do not cut up the grass; while on the south side there is a very large Bowling Green and a Pond, of an area about one and a half times that of Dunsapie Loch, which, besides being ornamental and affording a pleasant walk along its margin during summer, may be used for Curling in winter.

The winning design made specific provision for football

For the East Meadows, it reads: 'There is a space proposed to be allotted for the use of the Archers of the Queen's Body Guard, for Football, and for games which do not cut up the grass.'

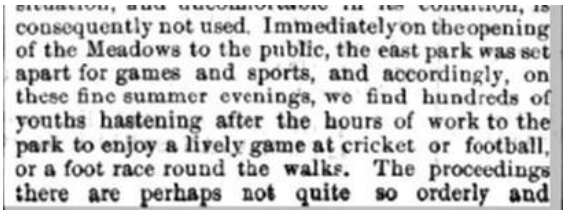
So, even in 1855, the need to provide space for people to play football was recognised by the city authorities.

As it happened, despite winning first prize, Thomas Davies' design never took shape as it was simply too expensive, and the only construction was a new east-west road, which is now Melville Drive.

However, the principle was established from that time: West Meadows for walks and gentle recreation, East Meadows for sports including football – and there was no charge for doing so. That was to be highly significant in years to come.

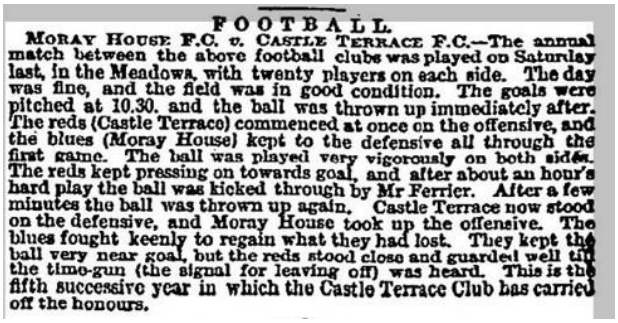
Following the Meadows, other public parks followed. One in the north of the city opened at Comely Bank in 1858, and that also became a popular football ground until it was covered in housing in the 1890s. By then we had various other parks around the city, but it was the Meadows which started it off. It is as important to football in Edinburgh as Queen's Park Recreation Ground and Glasgow Green are to Glasgow.

Football on the Meadows in the 1860s



consequently not used. Immediately on the opening of the Meadows to the public, the east park was set apart for games and sports, and accordingly, on these fine summer evenings, we find hundreds of youths hastening after the hours of work to the park to enjoy a lively game at cricket or football, or a foot race round the walks. The proceedings there are perhaps not quite so orderly and

May 1862: 'On fine summer evenings, we find hundreds of youths hastening after the hours of work to the park to enjoy a lively game at cricket or football'.



FOOTBALL.

MORAY HOUSE F.C. v. CASTLE TERRACE F.C.—The annual match between the above football clubs was played on Saturday last, in the Meadows, with twenty players on each side. The day was fine, and the field was in good condition. The goals were pitched at 10.30, and the ball was thrown up immediately after. The reds (Castle Terrace) commenced at once on the offensive, and the blues (Moray House) kept to the defensive all through the first game. The ball was played very vigorously on both sides. The reds kept pressing on towards goal, and after about an hour's hard play the ball was kicked through by Mr Ferrier. After a few minutes the ball was thrown up again. Castle Terrace now stood on the defensive, and Moray House took up the offensive. The blues fought keenly to regain what they had lost. They kept the ball very near goal, but the reds stood close and guarded well till the time-gun (the signal for leaving off) was heard. This is the fifth successive year in which the Castle Terrace Club has carried off the honours.

March 1869: Moray House FC v Castle Terrace FC for 'the fifth successive year'.

By the 1860s there is sufficient evidence to show that football was played widely and regularly in Edinburgh, and you start to see the division between the two codes which we now understand as association and rugby.

Rugby football was played in the city's main schools – Edinburgh Academy, Merchiston, the Royal High in particular – but they were reserved for the middle classes who could afford to send their sons there.

What about everyone else, how did they enjoy their football? It was under the radar for sure, but there is ample evidence in the newspapers of a lot of activity. In 1862, the papers report that hundreds of youths hasten to the Meadows on summer evenings to enjoy cricket and football. In 1866, there are reports of striking workmen playing games of football on Leith Links.

Did they have clubs and matches as we understand them? Probably not, because they would surely have been reported in the papers and there are hardly any reports. But there is this one, for Moray House FC v Castle Terrace FC in March 1869, described as an annual match, won by the latter for the fifth successive year. More properly it was between the Free Church Normal School at Moray House and the Church of Scotland Established Normal School in Castle Terrace.

So, two school teams but probably with the inclusion of some teachers. Precisely what game they played is not clear, their football appears to have been a crude form

of association football as there were no fixed posts and a crossbar, which would be necessary to play rugby.

However, the East Meadows were in a sorry state. Having previously been a loch it could be a marsh in winter and a dustbowl in summer, so it was a poor substitute for proper playing fields. Another round of improvements began in 1871, to level the ground and improve the drainage, and although it was a slow process and much criticised at the time, in the long run it did the job.

Meanwhile, over in Glasgow, something exciting was happening. Queen's Park set the ball rolling with their foundation in 1867, and their decision to adopt association football. Although they were initially short of opponents, they were never short of pioneering spirit and their influence led to the first Scotland v England international in November 1872, which in turn prompted an explosion of clubs in the west and the formation of the Scottish Football Association in March 1873.

But in Edinburgh? No real change. There was rugby football at the schools and their former pupil clubs, and the city hosted the first rugby international in 1871 at Raeburn Place, but no sign of the association game making any inroads. The men in the west weighed up the situation and decided that something needed to be done if football was to become a truly national sport.

Association football comes to Edinburgh, 1873



FOOTBALL MATCH.—SCOTTISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION.

A GAME (Association Rules) between two teams picked from the leading Western Clubs, will be played TO-DAY, on the GROUND of the ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL, at BONNINGTON.

Kick off at 3 P.M. Admission 6d.

MR GARDNER'S ELEVEN.

Goalkeeper—Dickson, Queen's Park.

Backs.	Forwards.
J. Michie, Vale of Leven.	W. Gibb, Clydesdale.
—M'Arly, Clydesdale.	F. Anderson, do.
Half Backs.	J. Wilson, Clydesdale.
R. Gardner, Clydesdale.	A. Mackinnon, Queen's Park.
C. Campbell, Queen's Park.	W. Mackinnon, do.
	M'Gregor, Vale of Leven.

MR THOMSON'S ELEVEN.

Goalkeeper—R. Parlane, Vale of Leven.

Backs.	*Forwards.*
J. Taylor, Queen's Park.	A. Taylor, Clydesdale.
J. M'Cort, Eastern.	A. Rae, Queen's Park.
Half Backs.	James R. Weir, Queen's Park.
J. J. Thomson, Queen's Park.	H. M'Neill, do.
R. Kinloch, Granville.	T. Lawrie, do.
	A. P. Broadfoot, do.

27 December 1873 at Raimes Park (now Victoria Park)

So they went into missionary mode and bridged the Glasgow-Edinburgh divide. Two days after Christmas, on 27 December 1873, Scotland's top association football

players took a train to Edinburgh, bringing everything needed to stage a game, including – would you believe – two sets of goalposts.

As there were no association football clubs in Edinburgh at the time, it stands to reason that there were no grounds either, so the organisers took the decision to rent a rugby ground for the day for their demonstration.

Venue for Edinburgh's first association football match



27 December 1873 at Raimes Park (now Victoria Park)

They headed for Raimes Park, which was then the home of rugby-playing Royal High School FP, and if the name doesn't sound familiar, it is now Victoria Park, off Newhaven Road in Leith. It took its name from Richard Raimes who lived next to the ground.

About 500 people braved the winter weather to come along and watch, and reports of the match varied in their enthusiasm. The *Scotsman*, representing the Edinburgh establishment, was not impressed: 'The game seemed to be characterised by great sameness. Lacking nearly all the excitement of the Rugby game … there was little to maintain the interest.' Curiously they then added 'The game is substantially the old Scotch style of football' which indicates a long history of this form of football.

On the other hand, the *Glasgow Herald* seems to have watched a different game: 'the match excited much interest … the play was equal and smart. Cheers for the players were given at parting.'

And the *North British Daily Mail* also praised the event, talking of: ‘magnificent efforts in the art of dribbling … several fine runs on both sides were much appreciated.’

Edinburgh’s first association football club: The 3rd Edinburgh Rifle Volunteers, founded Feb 1874



From the regimental company founded by John Hope in 1860

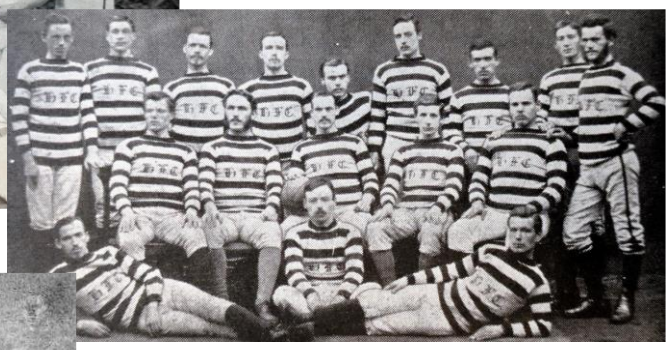
That match was the spark that lit the fire. Among the spectators were members of the 3rd Edinburgh Rifle Volunteers and they were so taken by what they saw that a few weeks later, on 24 February, they founded the city’s first association football club.

The 3rd ERV were encouraged by the company commander, whose name was John Hope – yes, the very same man who started the Foot-Ball Club fifty years before. He kicked off their first match and when they lifted their first trophy in 1876, the Edinburgh Cup, it was presented not to the team captain but to him.

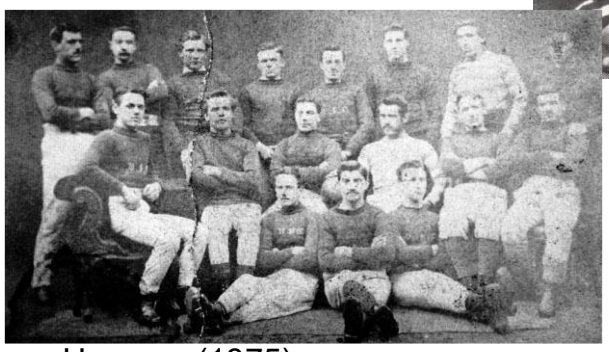
Edinburgh's other early association football clubs



Heart of Midlothian (1874)



Hibernian (1875)



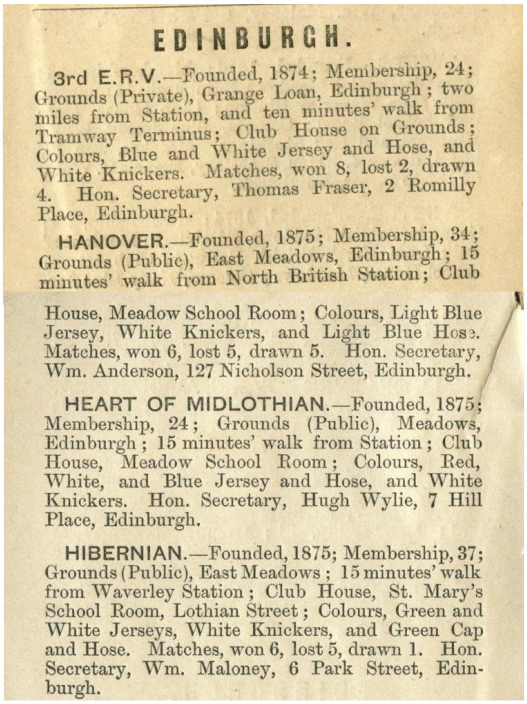
Hanover (1875)

Soon other clubs followed. Along came Heart of Midlothian, Thistle and Hanover, who together with the 3rd ERV founded the Edinburgh Football Association in 1875. Hibs were then founded in 1875 but at first nobody would play them – their application to join the Edinburgh FA was turned down because they were not members of the Scottish FA, and when they applied to the SFA they were rejected because of their Irish origins. The SFA wrote a sniffy letter to say that their association was only for Scots.

Their saviours were Hearts, who agreed to play Hibs on Christmas Day 1875 and out of that friendly gesture the great derby rivalry began.

Soon, clubs relished not just local friendlies but competitive matches in the Edinburgh FA Cup (later the East of Scotland Shield) and nationally in the Scottish Cup. They grew rapidly in numbers and influence.

Edinburgh's six football clubs in 1877



EDINBURGH.

3rd E.R.V.—Founded, 1874; Membership, 24; Grounds (Private), Grange Loan, Edinburgh; two miles from Station, and ten minutes' walk from Tramway Terminus; Club House on Grounds; Colours, Blue and White Jersey and Hose, and White Knickers. Matches, won 8, lost 2, drawn 4. Hon. Secretary, Thomas Fraser, 2 Romilly Place, Edinburgh.

HANOVER.—Founded, 1875; Membership, 34; Grounds (Public), East Meadows, Edinburgh; 15 minutes' walk from North British Station; Club House, Meadow School Room; Colours, Light Blue Jersey, White Knickers, and Light Blue Hose. Matches, won 6, lost 5, drawn 5. Hon. Secretary, Wm. Anderson, 127 Nicholson Street, Edinburgh.

HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN.—Founded, 1875; Membership, 24; Grounds (Public), Meadows, Edinburgh; 15 minutes' walk from Station; Club House, Meadow School Room; Colours, Red, White, and Blue Jersey and Hose, and White Knickers. Hon. Secretary, Hugh Wylie, 7 Hill Place, Edinburgh.

HIBERNIAN.—Founded, 1875; Membership, 37; Grounds (Public), East Meadows; 15 minutes' walk from Waverley Station; Club House, St. Mary's School Room, Lothian Street; Colours, Green and White Jerseys, White Knickers, and Green Cap and Hose. Matches, won 6, lost 5, drawn 1. Hon. Secretary, Wm. Maloney, 6 Park Street, Edinburgh.



SWIFTS.—Founded, 1876; Membership, 33; Grounds (Public), Meadows, Edinburgh; 15 minutes walk from Waverley Station; Club House, Meadow School Room; Colours, Blue Jersey, White Knickers, and Red Stockings. Matches, won 12, lost 4, drawn 4. Hon. Secretary, Francis G. Watt, 59 Bristo Street, Edinburgh.

THISTLE.—Founded, 1874; Membership, 25; Grounds (Public), Meadows, Edinburgh; 15 minutes' walk from North British Railway; Club House, School House, Meadows; Colours, Navy Blue Jersey, with White Band across Breast and Shoulders, White Knickers, and Blue Hose. Matches, won 8, lost 4, drawn 3. Hon. Secretary, John Henderson, 21 Carnegie Street, Edinburgh.

From the Scottish FA Annual, 1877-78

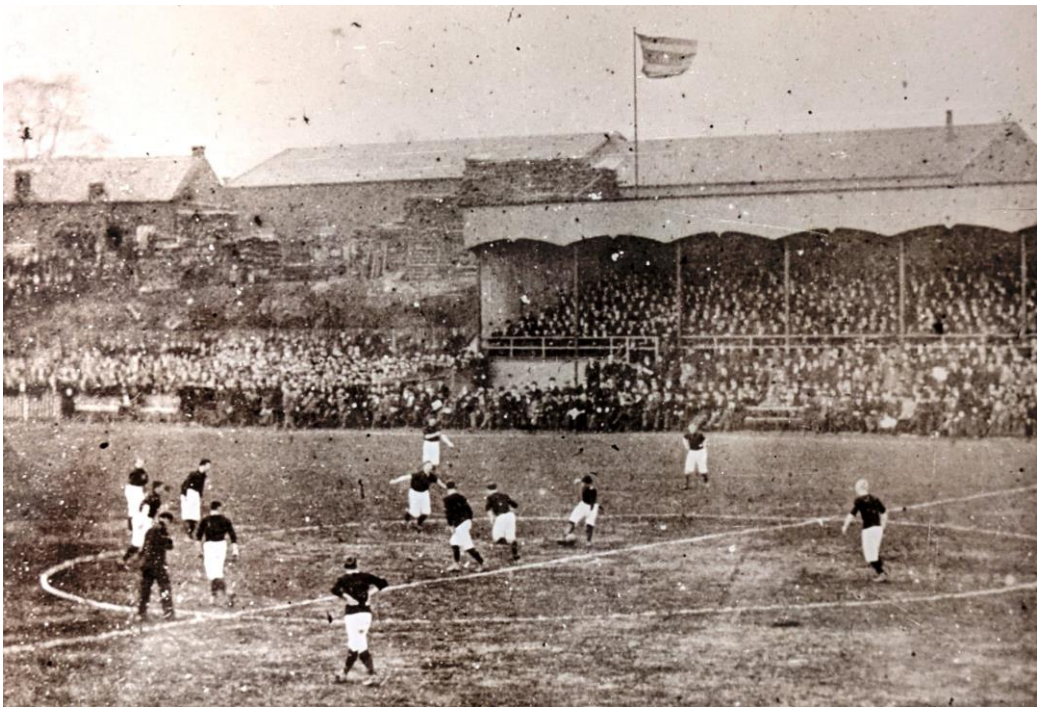
Take a look at the Scottish FA members in Edinburgh for 1877-78. Six clubs, five of them naming their home ground as the East Meadows, and only the 3rd ERV have private grounds at this point.

That season, Hibs met Hearts in the first round of the Scottish Cup, winning after a replay. Those were the last derbies played on the East Meadows. After the turn of the year, they met again in final of the Edinburgh Cup, with replay after replay until eventually Hearts took the honours after five monumental matches.

Such was the demand to see them that those ties were played on private grounds, where admission could be charged, and the big crowds proved the financial viability of football in a city which had previously been a rugby stronghold.

By 1878 Hearts and Hibs had waved farewell to the Meadows and secured their own grounds, just three or four years after being founded. Football had truly arrived in Edinburgh, and that's almost where this story ends.

Edinburgh at the epicentre of Scottish football



Scottish Cup final 1896: Hearts v Hibs at Logie Green

It was also the beginning of something special as the capital made its mark. The growth was exponential, hundreds of new clubs sprung up, thousands flocked to watch them. We had the first ever women's football match in 1881. By the end of the century, three Edinburgh clubs had won the Scottish Cup and the peak was 1895 when the city swept the board: Hearts won the first division, Hibs won the second division, and St Bernard's won the Scottish Cup.

A year later in 1896, the Scottish Cup final was played in Edinburgh, between two Edinburgh sides, placing this city right at the epicentre of Scottish football. Now that's a history which we can rightly be proud of.

And that's where I finish. I hope you enjoyed hearing about how, where and why Edinburgh's football story started.