The world's first football club 1824-2024

Talks given by Andy Mitchell on 4 & 11 December 2024



Good afternoon. Thanks to all of you for coming along to help celebrate the 200th birthday of the world's very first known club dedicated to football.

The Foot-Ball Club was established in Edinburgh precisely two hundred years ago today, on 11 December 1824. It may have been the first, but don't worry, we're not going to break into a rousing chorus of 'Football's Coming Home' as there are many homes of football.

Despite the strident claims of places like Sheffield, London, Cambridge and Glasgow, people have played versions of football for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, around Britain and around the world in all sorts of nations and cultures. The games ranged from gentle court entertainment to urban warfare, so the word 'football' was wide open to local interpretation.

But they all had one thing in common: they fed into the web that eventually created the modern game of association football, a process of evolution that came to a head in the nineteenth century as football was codified and standardised, enabling it to eventually become the world game.

In my talk today I will explain what led to the Foot-Ball Club being formed, and why it was in Edinburgh. I'll describe how and where they played, who the players were and the challenges they faced.

And finally I will outline some links between the game they played in the 1820s and 1830s, and the game of association football.

I am well aware that some historians dispute the club's relevance to the modern game, suggesting that it was just a quirk of history, but I believe the Foot-Ball Club played an important role in the development of the sport. Listen up, and decide for yourself!

So, how did we get here?

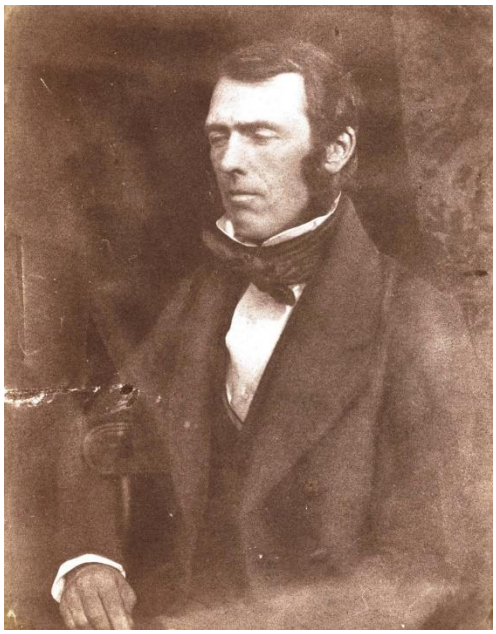
I am sure most people will be familiar with the formation of the Football Association in London in 1863, which marked the split from rugby, the great division between the kicking game and the carrying game. But that was not the starting point in itself, more like the end of the beginning.

Before 1863, and even for a while afterwards, there was no common agreement on how football should be played as every town, every school, had its own traditions and understandings. You can read about various attempts to agree on a code of football at Cambridge University from the 1840s, or the vibrant football culture which spread in Sheffield from the 1850s, or the heated debates in the early 1860s that led to the founding of the FA in London.

Before any of that happened, right here in the capital, a football club was thriving in Edinburgh in the 1820s, with their own set of rules.

Often when I tell people this, the first thing I am asked is what the club was called. But because they were unique, and the first, appropriately enough their name was simply The Foot-Ball Club.

The second question I am asked is what kind of football they played, was it rugby or soccer. The members wouldn't have understood that question as their brand of football was simply the one they had played since childhood, a vigorous game where a ball was kicked by two teams, between two goals – principles which we recognise to this day.



A calotype photograph of John Hope, c1847

The club was founded by a student named John Hope and his friends, and remained active for seventeen years. In that time, hundreds of young men joined up as members, which means they were playing regular, organised football in Edinburgh decades before the Football Association was formed.

The Foot-Ball Club didn't make waves at the time - in fact it kept such a low profile that the club is mentioned just once in the newspapers of the day, and that was

about a club dinner. There were no match reports because it was a closed club and there was no-one to play against, they never advertised for players, none of its members wrote about it in their personal memoirs. And there are not even any team photos because photography had not been invented yet.

The club might even have been lost to history, but thankfully John Hope was an obsessive hoarder. He filed away almost every scrap of paper during his life, an accumulation which, by the time of his death, amounted to over 200 boxes. Those boxes were then stored by a succession of conscientious Edinburgh lawyers, all working in his old office in Moray Place, and eventually were deposited by the Hope Trust in this very building, the National Records of Scotland.

And it was here that the Foot-Ball Club was re-discovered in the 1990s by Dr Neil Tranter of Stirling University, who had to wade through mountains of uncatalogued papers, some of which had not been touched for a hundred years. Thankfully they have now been digitised.

The upshot is that John Hope's Foot-Ball Club papers represent an archive of immense historical significance, one which few other sporting organisations can emulate. For example, there is no equivalent archive for Hibs, Hearts, Rangers or Celtic.

Today is all about understanding how it came about.

To begin, it is important to appreciate that organised sport for adults has been in Edinburgh's DNA from the earliest times. The city has much more of a sporting pedigree than many people realise.

In the 16th century, for example, lawful games for bodily exercise were actually promoted for students at the university, so long as they didn't give an excuse for missing lectures, nor lead to drinking or gambling. In the 1590s, the university had its own playing field, and the students were taken there for supervised games.

In eighteenth century Edinburgh, sport for well-to-do adult men became socially acceptable and grew in popularity as they sought to enjoy outdoor recreation in the company of like-minded others.

Edinburgh's sporting 'world firsts'

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

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

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

Gymnastics: first club (1785, Edinburgh doctors)

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

Football: first club (1824, the Foot-Ball Club)
first rules (1833, by John Hope)

That helps to explain why this city gave birth to some of the world's earliest sporting clubs in golf, bowls and gymnastics, and club members then wrote the first known rules for golf, bowls and curling. Those rules enabled the clubs to hold competitions, award trophies and medals, and organise all the social activities associated with that. Sport became part of middle class life and there was considerable experience in the city of forming clubs, managing membership and writing rules.

Then, in the early nineteenth century the city saw a marked increase in more vigorous and athletic recreations like cricket, racket sports, fencing, quoiting and skating. As *The Scotsman* newspaper commented in 1823: 'Gymnastic exercises seem to be growing into credit here'.

However, at that point, the list of popular activities for adults in the city did not include football, which was essentially seen as belonging to the schoolyard. That was about to change.



The High School of Edinburgh in 1819 and as it is today.

Football was already well-established for boys at the High School of Edinburgh. For example, Sir Walter Scott, who was educated there in the 1780s, made no secret of his love of football, while some of his contemporaries recalled playing the game there too.

In the High School Yards, there was a hard surface confined by stone walls, hence the type of football they played in their free time was a kicking rather than a carrying game as full body tackling was likely to cause injury and damage to clothing - the same principle which applied to urban public schools in England.

If you want to check it out, those yards are still in their original layout, now part of Edinburgh University's Climate Change Institute.

However, once boys left the High School, they stopped playing football. Apart from the obvious work and family responsibilities, there was a very pragmatic reason for this: where could they play?

As in many big cities, public parks in Edinburgh were very limited and even those that did exist, like Bruntsfield Links or Leith Links where the golfers played, were still rough hilly areas which had not yet been flattened. The Meadows, famously the nursery for Hearts and Hibs in their early days, were not laid out for recreation until the 1850s. Any flat open grassy areas were used as pasture for cows and sheep, or for domestic chores like drying clothes. Playing in the street was illegal, as detailed in the Edinburgh Police Regulations.

So, finding space for active sports and recreation was a challenge. It was John Hope who came up with the solution after he left school and went up to the university.

He rented a field at Dalry, just beyond the western city limits, and paid enough to compensate the owner for keeping it clear of grazing animals. Hope also commissioned a ball – a handmade leather cover inflated with a pig's bladder – together with painted wooden poles to use as goalposts.

Altogether, it was an expensive undertaking, as we can read in the club accounts, so to cover the cost he invited his friends to subscribe in his new club, and they jumped at the opportunity, paying a shilling and sixpence each for the privilege. The Foot-Ball Club players met for the very first time on Saturday 11 December 1824.

Let's take a look at John Hope, the instigator of the club, who was only 17 years old at the time. Born in Edinburgh in 1807, son of a lawyer, he was educated at the High School but not exactly a star pupil. His biographer admitted 'his mind was not of the sparkling order, he was a steady plodding worker who did not dazzle with meteoric brilliance'. Sounds like an ideal lawyer!

He duly went to work for his father, spent a couple of years at Edinburgh University studying Law, did not graduate and followed in his father's footsteps as a Writer to the Signet, a prestigious society of legal professionals. He lived his entire life in Edinburgh's New Town – which really was new at that time – with his childhood in Queen Street then as an adult in Moray Place. It was very much an Edinburgh establishment, middle class life.



31 Moray Place, John Hope's home from 1825: 'a new place formed in the fields to which we used to look with admiration, now studded with houses.'

He became extremely wealthy and devoted his fortune and his boundless energy to causes he believed in. John Hope was an influential character in nineteenth century Edinburgh in many fields: a social reformer, a philanthropist, an environmental campaigner, a town councillor and of course a sportsman.

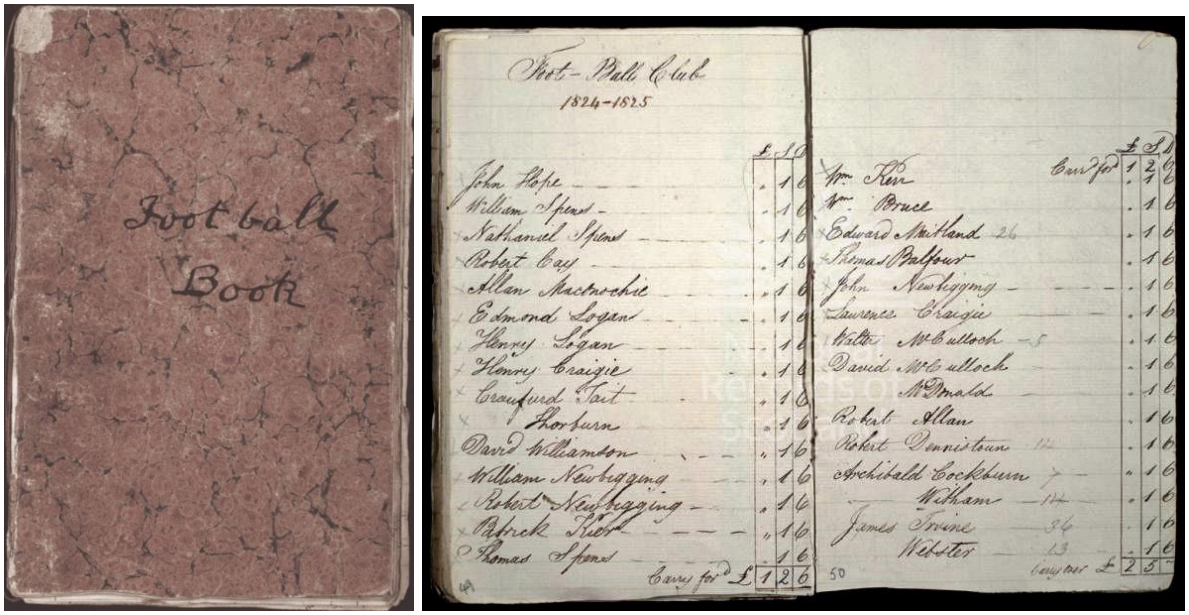
It has to be said, by today's standards some of his beliefs are bigoted or blinkered. He made ferocious attacks on Popery and Catholicism, and was obsessed with abstinence from alcohol, so much so that he insisted all his staff were teetotal, and he fell out with local churches over their use of wine for communion.

But he was also a passionate social reformer who spoke up for the poor and the downtrodden, for example leading a campaign to introduce the Saturday half-holiday. He railed against pollution in the Water of Leith, he organised regular excursions to the countryside for thousands of slum kids, and provided an education to help them escape those slums.

Most of all, throughout his life he believed in and promoted the benefits of sport, exercise and fresh air, and for us, he stands out today because he loved football.

And in that, John Hope was certainly not alone.

The Foot-Ball Club papers contain a treasure trove of accounts, receipts, letters and even a set of fledgling rules. But for me, the most fascinating pages are the membership lists.



The 'Football Book' including club membership lists from 1824 onwards

Although the records are not quite complete, covering 1824 to 1828, then 1831 to 1834, and finally 1836, they record everyone who joined and paid a subscription. Some had a fleeting membership, some came back year after year, and three of them were members throughout the club's existence.

Altogether, in these surviving books you can find the names of around 300 men as

members, and a key part of the research for the book we wrote was to identify them, where they came from, and what they did with their lives. The early membership lists give only a name, which sometimes presented quite a challenge to find out who they were, then in the 1830s they also include an address which did make it a bit easier.

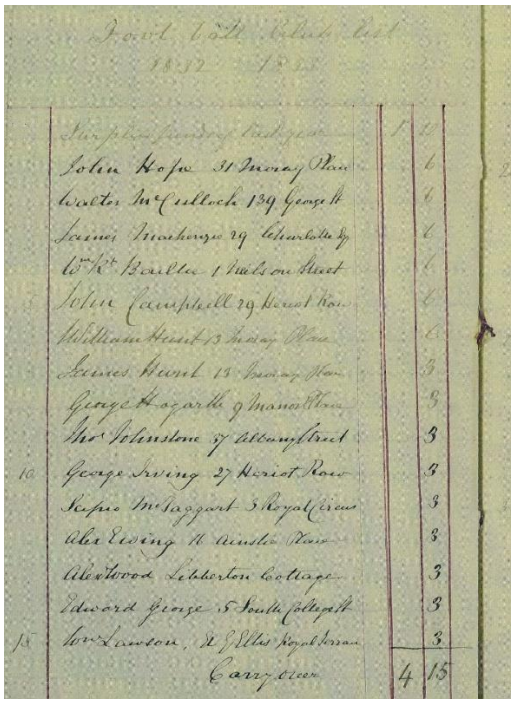
Foot-Ball Club membership numbers

1824/25	61		
1825/26	77	*Decline after 1832:*	
1826/27	84	1832/33	30
1827/28	72	1834	27
(*no records 1828-31*)		1836	26
1831 summer	70	*No further records*	
1831/32	60	*Club disbanded 1841*	

These are the numbers season by season, and as you can see the club had a buoyant first eight years before falling away.

Assuming there was no significant drop in the years that are missing, this was a remarkably consistent membership, and although a lot of members only joined for one or two years, there was a steady stream of young men willing to take their place.

Then in 1832, something changed, the numbers halved. Was it a change of fashion, resistance to new rules, an internal dispute, or something else? Sadly we don't know, but the drop in numbers prompted a rise in the cost of subscription, and by the end of the decade the club appears to have become unviable.



Foot-Ball Club membership list 1832-33

However, that's for later. Let's have a look at the members themselves.

Not surprisingly, their origins were largely within Edinburgh, young men who had been at two major schools here.

John Hope, of course, was at the High School, as was his father and most of Edinburgh male society in the early 19th century. So there are strong links to the High School – as you would expect – but the other school which features largely, with at least 56 members educated there, is the Edinburgh Academy, which coincidentally is also celebrating its bicentenary this year. The Academy, as you may know, played a crucial role in introducing rugby football to Scotland in the 1850s, yet this extensive membership of the Foot-Ball Club confirms that Academy boys enjoyed football for many years before then, and it was of the kicking rather than the carrying variety.

A significant proportion of members were schooled further afield. Within Scotland, they came from the Borders to the northern isles, and many in between.

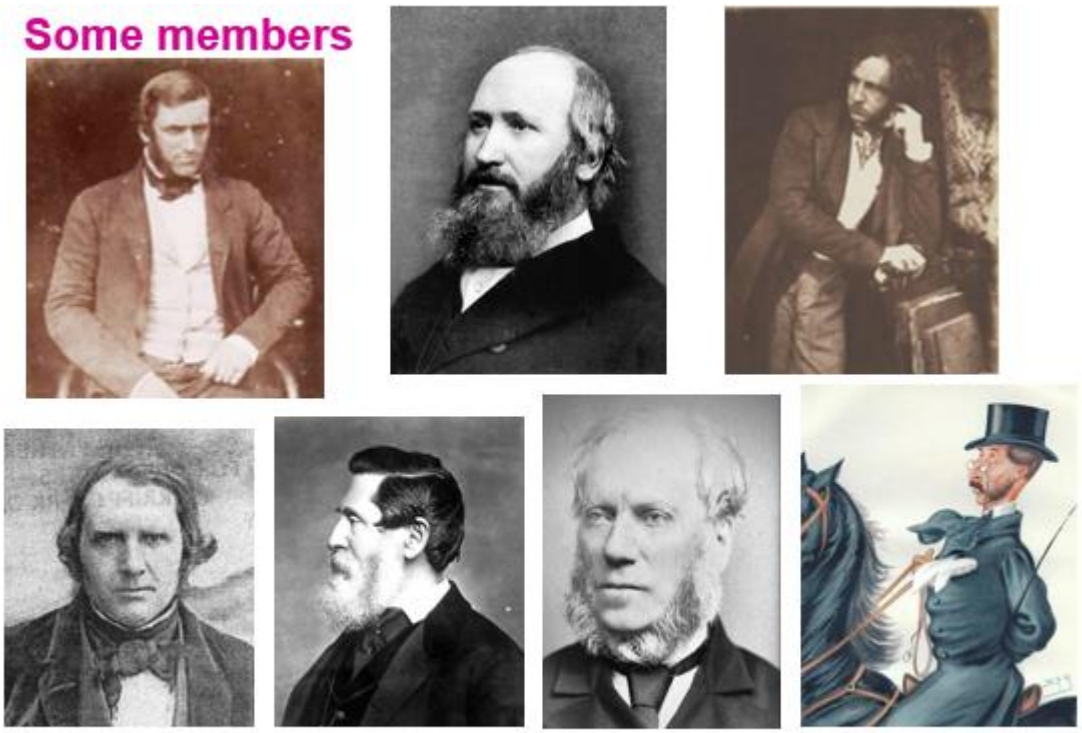
There was also a smattering of English members. At that time Oxford and Cambridge universities only accepted Church of England conformists, so students who were non-conformists or Roman Catholics were obliged to seek their university education in Scotland or abroad.

Edinburgh was a popular choice and one example of that was George Witham, an English Roman Catholic who was a member of the Foot-Ball Club in its first two years while studying medicine. He had been educated at Stonyhurst, a Jesuit school in Lancashire, which had a traditional Shrove Tuesday football game known as The Grand Match.

So when young men like him came to Edinburgh to study, the fact that they chose to join the Foot-Ball Club infers that they had already played a form of football at home or school. The game was perhaps much more widespread than is generally thought.

Where did the members live? From 1831-36, the membership rolls include virtually every major street in Edinburgh's New Town: Melville Street (9), Heriot Row (7), Moray Place (6), Albyn Place (4), Drummond Place (4), Forres Street (4), Great King Street (4), Royal Terrace (4), Ainslie Place (3), Albany Street (3), George Street (3), Northumberland Street (3), Queen Street (3), Royal Circus (3), Walker Street (3) and so on.

It is a very strong concentration. Less than ten per cent of the addresses were from outside the New Town area, and apart from three in the vicinity of the University, none were in the historic Old Town.



Top: Robert Dundas Cay (lawyer), Alexander Wood (doctor), James Rannie Swinton (portrait painter). Below: Scipio McTaggart (lawyer), Patrick Keir (advocate), James Dunsmure (surgeon), John Mackenzie-Grieve (Horse Guards).

What at about occupations? Here are pictures of some of them, obviously taken later in life although thankfully Edinburgh was a hotbed of pioneering photographers and several members had their portraits taken by Hill and Adamson in the 1840s.

While most members were students when they joined, almost all went on to be professional men - lawyers, doctors, army officers, into commerce and the church. There is no evidence of occupations such as shopkeepers and clerks. It emphasises further the solidly middle class background of the members.

Given John Hope's professional connections, it is little surprise that over half of the members whose careers have been identified became lawyers, and of those, most became Writers to the Signet. Edinburgh, then as now, was a city of lawyers, and many lawyers had the time, the affluence and the social status to join clubs and indulge in recreations.

There are also strong connections to medicine, with a number who became prominent surgeons and doctors – such as Alexander Wood, who invented the hypodermic syringe, and two future presidents of the Royal College of Surgeons.

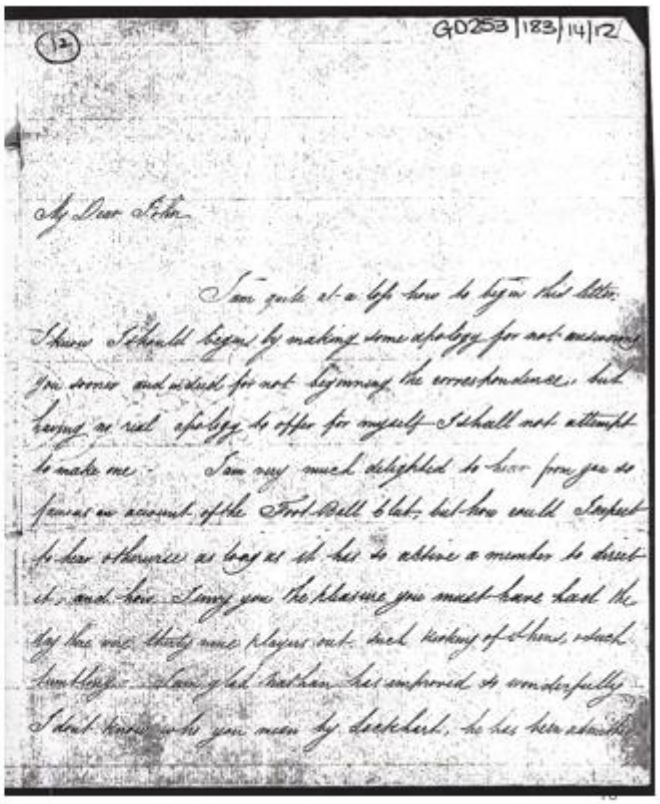
About a dozen members had military connections, some went into the church, into accountancy, into politics, and a range of careers ranging from indigo planter to wine merchant.

What did they get out of playing football? There is some interesting correspondence among the club papers, albeit largely letters which Hope received, rather than those he sent.

Letter to John Hope in 1825 from Henry Logan in London:

"I am very much delighted to hear from you so famous an account of the Foot-Ball Club …

"How I envy you the pleasure you must have had the day there were thirty-nine players out. Such kicking of shins & such tumbling."



This one in 1825 is from Henry Logan, a club member who had gone to London, saying how much he missed the action. 'I am delighted to hear from you so famous an account of the Foot-Ball Club, but how could I expect to hear otherwise as long as it has so active a member to direct it. How I envy you the pleasure you must have had the day there were 39 players out, such kicking of shins and such tumbling.'

Another letter, from a member who went to Cambridge University in 1828, effectively said that he didn't see much prospect of football catching on there – somewhat ironic given the rule makers of the 1840s, but a further emphasis that Hope's Foot-Ball Club was ahead of its time.

Unfortunately there is little of John Hope's own impressions of his club and just one letter written by him mentions football. He wrote to Thomas Telford, the great road builder who was a family friend, after staying with him in 1829 on the way to Europe for the Grand Tour. 'Often have I thought with pleasure on those happy weeks. Ever will I remember the 18 Nov in Cardiff, the 22 at Ludlow, when football was the subject of conversation.' So clearly, even when away from Edinburgh, Hope was something of a football obsessive.

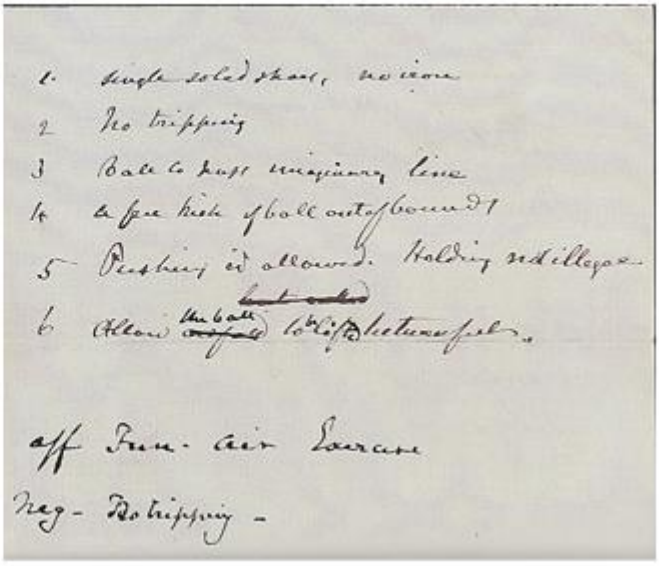
Moving on to the club itself, here are some details of its activities.

These rules which John Hope wrote in 1833, on the back of a budget statement, represent perhaps the most important single document in the archive. Although brief, leaving much to the imagination, they are the first known written rules of football.

John Hope's football rules of 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

Aff: Fun - air - exercise
Neg: No tripping



They could be seen as the earliest attempt at football codification as they easily predate the Cambridge University Rules, the Sheffield Rules and the founding of the Football Association.

They are significant both in what they say and what they do not say. That was a sentiment echoed in the early editions of Rugby School's laws in the 1840s, which stated they were to be regarded 'rather as a set of decisions on certain disputed points in football, than as containing all the Laws of the Game, which are too well known to render any explanation necessary.'

In other words, we all know how the game is played, but this will help to settle any arguments, especially for anyone who is unfamiliar with our kind of football. Let's go through them.

The first two rules indicate a concern for safety and a desire to avoid injury

1. *Single soled shoes, no iron*
2. *No tripping*

Rules three and four introduce the method of scoring, and a defined playing area

3. *Ball to pass imaginary line*
4. *A free kick if ball out of bounds*

Rule five indicates a controlled amount of physical contact.

5. *Pushing is allowed. Holding not illegal*

The meaning of rule six is less clear, and from the crossings out it seems that Hope himself was unsure of the best form of words.

6. *Allow the ball to be lifted between fields*

It appears to mean that the only time the ball could be handled was when it was out of play.

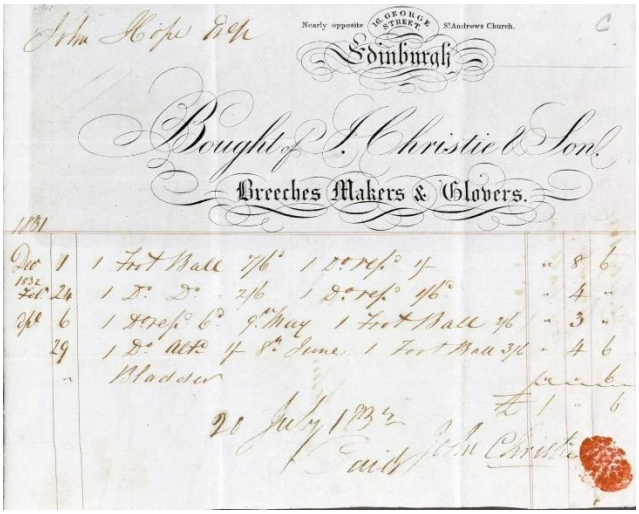
Underneath, he notes the attributes of the game:

Aff [affirmative] Fun, air, exercise
Neg [negative] No tripping

They indicate a game between two sides, with no handling, carrying or running with the ball, physicality but not aggression, within a defined playing surface, and the method of scoring was kicking the ball through the goal – all in all, a strong indication that this was a precursor to what we would recognise as association football rather than the rugby variety.

More about their game can be worked out through the playing equipment, which can be discovered through receipts, accounts and letters. Perhaps the most illuminating part of this is the ball itself.

Footballs were made using an imperfect technology which had changed little from medieval times – an inflated pig's bladder inside a stitched leather casing. The world's oldest known football, which dates to around 1540, follows this model which was simple to make but notoriously prone to bursting. The invention of india rubber bladders had yet to come!


Nearly opposite GEORGE STREET St Andrews Church.

Edinburgh

Bought of J. Christie & Son.

Breeches Makers & Glovers.

1831

This receipt, from James Christie and Son, breeches makers and glovers in George Street, shows that if you wanted a football in 1831 you had to have it made specially and pay handsomely.

The leather case cost 2s 6d or 3 shillings, fairly expensive but at least it was fairly durable which is more than could be said for the contents.

The footballers required a constant supply of fresh pig bladders, and no doubt the city's butchers were more than happy to supply them at between threepence and sixpence each. The bladders would burst frequently, and a spreadsheet which John Hope kept in 1834 showed that sometimes four or five bladders would be needed simply to get through one afternoon's play. Overall there are records for the purchase of 274 bladders in the accounts.

In addition, there was the paraphernalia of ball maintenance, such as little tin pipes for blowing them up and oil to soften the leather cases.

Between games, the cases were stretched over a round wooden last to keep their shape. That wooden last was 22 inches in circumference, so the ball was clearly smaller than a modern football which is about 27 inches.

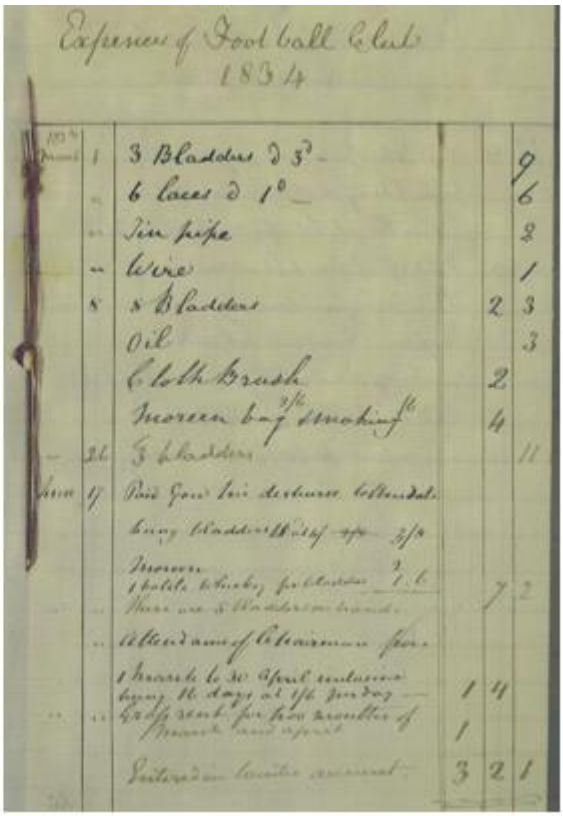
And the final element of ball preparation that you will find in the accounts, somewhat surprisingly for a teetotaller like Hope, was whisky. It was used to soak and cleanse those raw bladders, the preparation of which was a particularly disgusting process.

Keeping the club going was an expensive undertaking, and the costs are itemised in detail in the club accounts for 1834 which total 3 pounds, two shillings and a penny.

Foot-Ball Club expenses in 1834

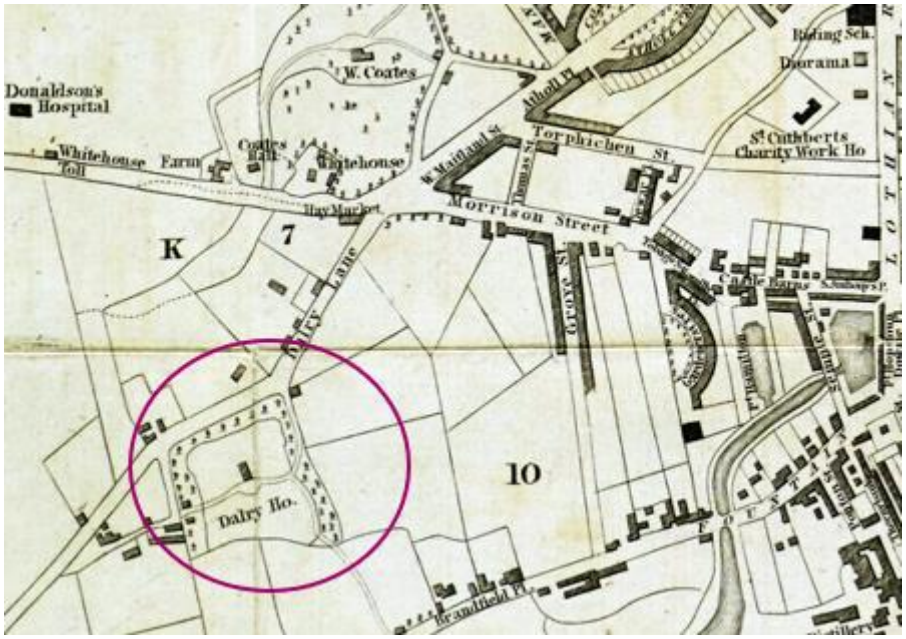
3 bladders at 3d – 9d
6 laces at 1d – 6d
Tin pipe - 2d
Wire – 1d
8 bladders – 2s 3d
Oil – 3d
Cloth brush - 2s
Moreen (canvas) bag – 4s

Paid Gow for expenses:
Bottle of whisky – 1s 6d.
Attendance – 1s 6d per day, total £1 4s
Grass rent - £1



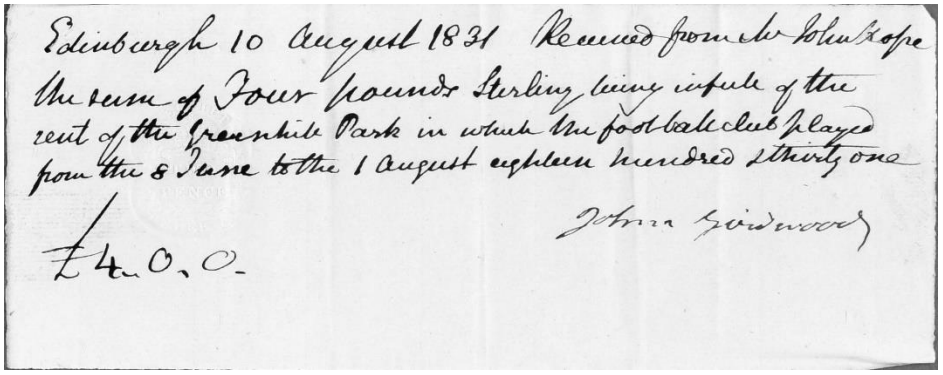
Keeping the players supplied with usable footballs was not just expensive it was a time-consuming business and right from the start Hope employed a man or a boy – at this time James Gow – to be in attendance on match days. For a shilling or one and six a week, his primary job was to blow up the balls and keep replacements ready. He would also prepare the pitch by putting up the goalposts and look after the equipment through the week.

The other major cost was paying for a pitch. The club had three grounds, all of them beyond the suburbs in the south and west of the city, which is quite a distance from the New Town where most of the members lived. I guess that indicates just how difficult it was to find somewhere suitable to play.



Their first home from 1824 was Dalry Park, an enclosed farm field, leased from a cowfeeder called George Spence for 5s 3d (ie a quarter guinea) a month. The specific field they used is unknown, and the area is now covered by the late Victorian tenements of Dalry Road and Caledonian Crescent, although Dalry House, remarkably, has survived.

The lease came to an abrupt end in 1831, when there is a mysterious receipt in the records. John Hope had to pay 15 shillings compensation for unspecified damages done to the Dalry Parks, presumably by boisterous footballers, and the club had to find a new home.

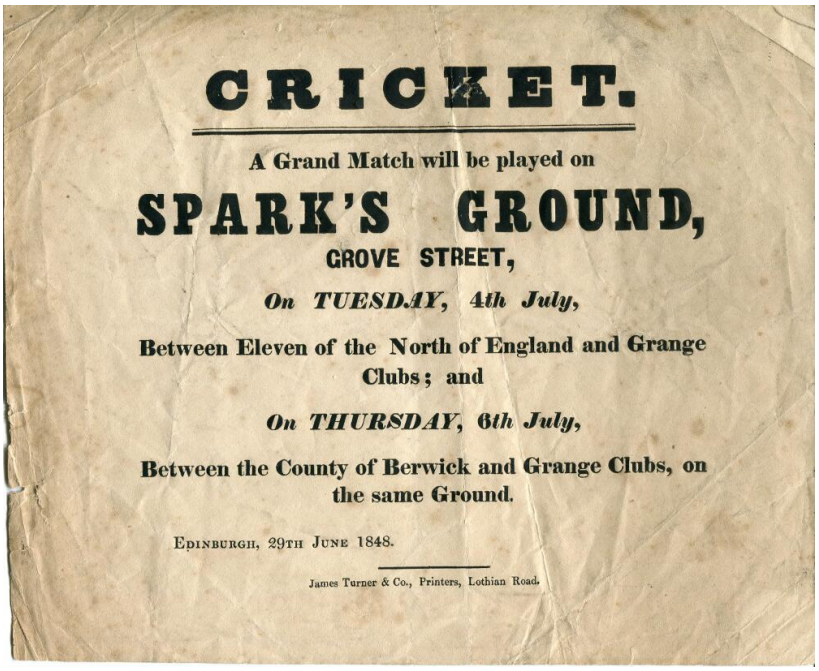

Edinburgh 10 August 1831 Received from Mr John Hope the sum of Four Pounds Sterling being in full of the rent of the Greenhill Park in which the foot ball club played from the 8 June to the 1 August eighteen hundred thirty one

John Goldwood

£4. 0. 0.

Next they settled at Greenhill Park, just to the south of Bruntsfield Links and now covered in upmarket Victorian housing. A lease was drawn up to play year round, although it was considerably more expensive in summer because of the loss of grass feeding and the need to cut the grass manually. As this receipt shows, it was two pounds a month in summer but just ten shillings a month the rest of the year.

Then in 1836 they moved to their third and final home, the newly-opened Grove Park, also known as Sparks' Ground. It was created as a home for Grange Cricket Club by their professional, John Sparks, and was quite an exciting development for the city as it was Edinburgh's first dedicated enclosed sports ground.



CRICKET.

A Grand Match will be played on

SPARK'S GROUND,

GROVE STREET,

On TUESDAY, 4th July,

Between Eleven of the North of England and Grange Clubs; and

On THURSDAY, 6th July,

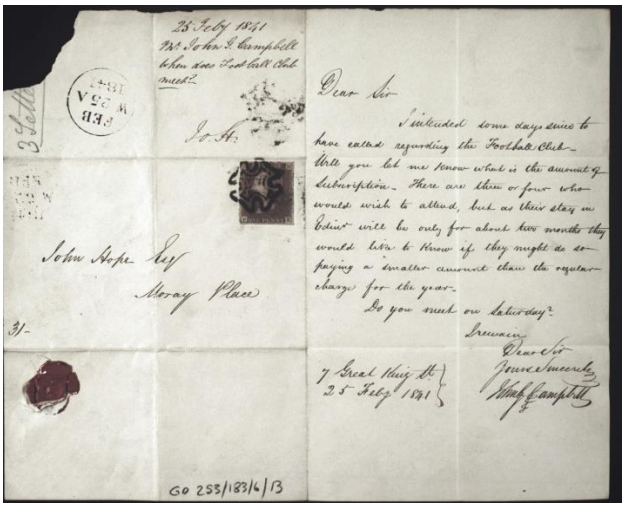
Between the County of Berwick and Grange Clubs, on the same Ground.

EDINBURGH, 29TH JUNE 1848.

James Turner & Co., Printers, Lothian Road.

Sparks, who lived in a cottage on the ground, let it out not just to cricketers but to a variety of sportsmen including footballers, athletes and pigeon shooters. As far as we know, that is where the club played its last matches.

The end came in 1841. We know the club was still active in 1840 as John Hope wrote to the trustees of John Watson's School to ask if the school field might be available for football, but they don't appear to have reached agreement.



25 Feby 1841
Wm John G. Campbell
when does Foot Ball Club meet?

Dear Sir

I intended some days since to have called regarding the Football Club – Will you let me know what is the amount of subscription – There are three or four who would wish to attend, but as their stay in Edin[r] will be only for about two months they would like to know if they might do so paying a smaller amount than the regular charge for the year –

Do you meet on Saturday?

Yours truly

7 Great King St
25 Feby 1841

GO 253/183/4/13

The following year it was all over, and this letter from February 1841 is virtually the final item in the club's history. It is a request from John Campbell of 7 Great King Street, asking if three or four friends could join: "What is the amount of subscription? There are three or four who would wish to attend."

Campbell already knew the club well, having been a member ten years previously, but he was too late. There is no recorded response and around that time the Foot-Ball Club was wound up.

There is a final, single line from John Hope's accountant in April 1841 which acknowledges a payment of £4 13 shillings and a penny to 'make up the football deficiency'. That sounds like an effort to close the book.

It was clear that the club had been dwindling for some time, and it seems that Hope's domineering organisational skills were a double edged sword. He ran the club meticulously and almost single-handedly, but when he wanted to move on there was no-one to take his place. It's a problem football clubs face to this day – just think of Manchester United and Alex Ferguson – how to replace a dominant figure when he retires.

So, what happened next? Was that the end or a beginning?

Can the early Edinburgh footballers be linked to the development of football as a national sport?

The traditional narrative is that association football only came here in 1873, when Queen's Park played a demonstration match that kick-started the formation of the first clubs in the city.



But there is actually a lot going on before then. I am the first to admit there is no straightforward thread, in fact there is little evidence of organised adult football being played in Edinburgh in the 1840s, although there is this wonderful image which features young men playing football on Calton Hill, which we used on the front cover of our book. Clearly, football was a part of everyday life for some.

The 1850s onwards, however, witnessed a flourishing of football activity in several parts of the UK, with Edinburgh again to the fore.





The next significant event dates from 1851, when the Edinburgh University Football Club challenged the 93rd Highlanders, garrisoned in Edinburgh Castle, to a football match in Holyrood Park. The losers agreed to present the winners with a silver medal – and here it is, the world's oldest football prize.

Won by the soldiers, this wonderful medal is preserved in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders museum and it depicts clearly a kicking, association-type, form of football.

The students played other matches that spring, including one that was a Scotland v England contest, so clearly football was still popular.

John Hope reappeared as a catalyst for football in 1854 when he opened Stockbridge playing field in the city, next door to Raeburn Place, where the first rugby international was staged two decades later.

At his park – which is where the Grange Cricket Club now play – he encouraged boys to play football, writing 'the game is strongly recommended as giving most exercise and fun in a short time'.

He also laid down the rules of play – and his 1854 printed rules bear similarities not just to his 1833 rules, but also to the future codes for association football.

For example:

- No hacking – one of the key features of the first laws of association football.
- The method of scoring is between the posts – as in association football.
- There is no handling – as in association football.
- The players wear distinctive uniforms, with different colour caps
- And good behaviour is a must.

John Hope's football rules, 1854 – how the game should be played

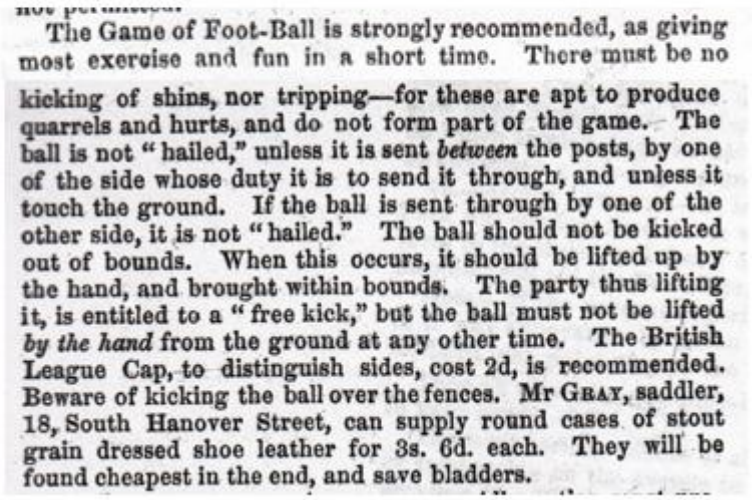
No kicking of shins (hacking), no tripping

Goal scored between the posts

No use of the hands

Free kick when ball goes out of play

Caps to distinguish teams



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.

Unfortunately he could not renew his lease of Stockbridge Park, and that inadvertently opened the door to the handling code.

That's because in the very same year, 1854, rugby football established a grip on the city which some would say it has never really relinquished.

By an accident of fate, the brothers Alexander and Francis Crombie, who had earlier been at Merchiston, came back to Edinburgh after a couple of years at Durham School, which played football to rugby rules.

Francis Crombie went to Edinburgh Academy just as the school opened its new sports ground right next door to John Hope's ground - and the fact he had a little booklet of rules which described how to play that code of football was very useful. The Academy took up rugby football, and the other principal schools in the city followed their example.

You might think that was when the thread to the creation of association football was broken, but the city's influence was far reaching and there are several notable connections, not least that two of the men who attending the founding meeting of the Football Association in London in 1863 had learned to play the game at school in Edinburgh.

There was also the creation of the Meadows as a recreation area in the 1850s, and the plans made specific mention of providing space for football. Clearly the city authorities recognised that the sport was important!

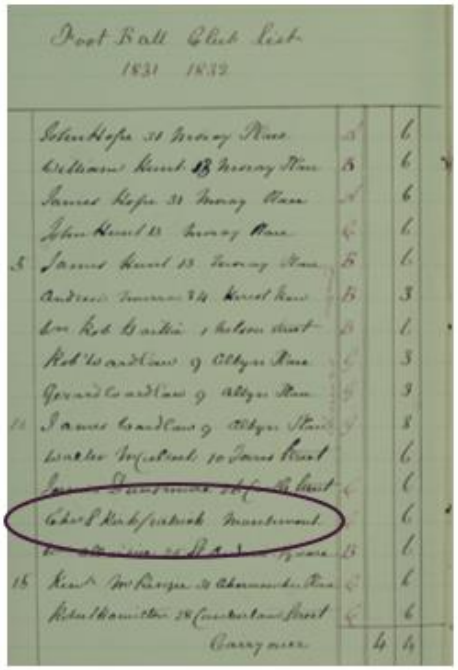
Another interesting aspect is that there are several Foot-Ball Club members whose sons played football, after it was codified, in the 1860s and 1870s. If you believe that sons learn from their fathers, that is quite a remarkable legacy. Two of them in particular are worth highlighting.

Father to son (1)

Charles Sharpe Kirkpatrick, Foot-Ball Club member, season 1831-32

and below, his son James Kirkpatrick. Scotland captain 1870, FA Cup winner 1878





One link to the next generation is James Kirkpatrick, captain of Scotland in the first unofficial association football international of 1870, not to mention an FA Cup winner with Wanderers in 1878. He was a son of Charles Sharpe Kirkpatrick, a member of the Foot-Ball Club in 1831.

Father to son (2)



James Moncreiff, Foot-Ball Club member, season 1832-33





and his son Francis Moncreiff, Scotland rugby captain 1871

And in the other code, there is Francis Moncreiff, Scotland's captain in the first international rugby match against England in 1871. He was a son of James Moncreiff (a future Lord Advocate and founder of Grange Cricket Club) who was a member in 1832.

So, the captains of the first two Scotland football teams, association and rugby, were sons of Foot-Ball Club members.

John Hope himself had one last chance to promote the game when association football finally came to Edinburgh in the 1870s, thanks to the missionary efforts of Queen's Park FC who played a demonstration match in December 1873.



Within weeks he had encouraged the soldiers in the 3rd Edinburgh Rifle Volunteers, which he commanded, to form one of the city's first clubs. He kicked off their very first match, and when the Volunteers won their first trophy in 1876, the Edinburgh Shield, it was presented not to the club captain, but to him, in recognition of his influence.

Members of the 3rd ERV later went on to found St Bernard's FC, who won the Scottish Cup in 1895. So John Hope can be seen as part of a thread which runs all the way from the formation of his Club in 1824 to victory in the national cup competition in the final decade of the century.

However, he wasn't around to see that triumph.

When John Hope died in 1893, he was one of the city's richest men, with a fortune which would be worth about £50 million in today's money.

With no children, having never married, he left most of his fortune to the Hope Trust, a religious charity. His extended family, who were distraught at getting nothing, mounted a bitter legal challenge which claimed, among other things, that he suffered from insane delusions when he wrote the will.

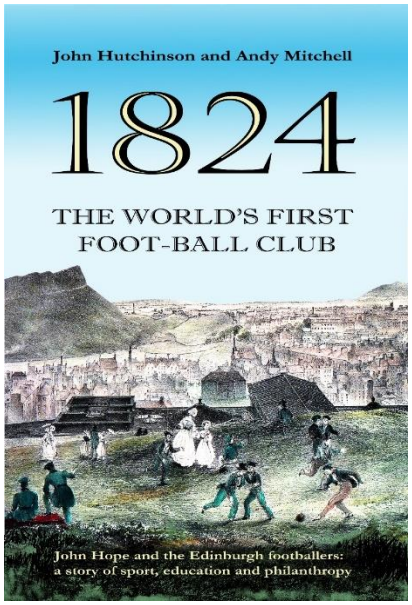
It took six years going through the courts before the family lost, and the outcome was the Hope Trust has continued his work in temperance and religion to this day. Until recently they remained based at 31 Moray Place, where they stored his archive before passing it on to the National Records of Scotland. I should say that I am extremely grateful to the Hope Trustees for granting permission to use images from the archive.



John Hope's grave in Greyfriars Kirkyard, where he is buried in the family lair

And that is where we come to the end.

John Hutchinson and I recently published a biography of John Hope and the story of his Foot-Ball Club, and I hope you have heard enough of interest today to think about reading it.



Hope's story is not just about football, he also impacted on a number of other fields in Edinburgh's story, not without controversy, but I hope that you will agree that he deserves particular recognition for his contribution to the early development of football.

Thanks to him, we have the world's first football club, and he should be celebrated as a trailblazer for the game we know and love today.