

Charity Bike Ride for Hibs Legend Dan McMichael



Lifelong Hibs fan Hugh Cockburn will take part in a charity bike ride from London to Edinburgh next month to raise funds for the St Patrick's Branch of the Hibs' Supporters Club's campaign to purchase a fitting memorial to club legend Dan McMichael, who was the manager when the Scottish Cup last sat in the Easter Road trophy room.

The 444 mile journey will begin at Tower Bridge on Friday 3 May 2013, and Hugh will average well over 100 miles per day before arriving in the capital on the following Monday, hopefully between 3pm and 4pm. Approaching Edinburgh, the ride goes via Portobello Road and onto London Road, Meadowbank, then through Holyrood Park to Duke's Walk and finally Queen's Drive.

He may take a quick detour however, (time permitting), as Hibs have kindly invited him to pop into Easter Road before he crosses the finishing line.

Speaking to The Edinburgh Reporter, Hugh explained how he came to be involved in the venture: "I joined St Pat's just after it started and have met some great people. I cycle to and from work and have done some charity bike rides before, and I was booked to do this one from London to Edinburgh, so when I heard about the campaign to fund a memorial for Dan McMichael, I volunteered to do the ride to raise money for the cause. I think it's unbelievable that he is in an unmarked grave considering what he did for our club."

Hugh is a keen cyclist, and has taken part in a number of charity rides over the years, and actually joined former Hibs star Bobby Smith's sons for part of the journey, when they

rode from Easter Road to Leicester to commemorate the far too early death of their father who had served both clubs with distinction.

Having been brought up in Dunfermline, just round the corner from the great Alex Edwards, Hugh has followed Hibs since the sixties, and remembers the great Turnbull's Tornados era with affection, including the many fantastic European nights.

He moved to Sunderland thirty years ago, but remains a committed season ticket holder in the East Stand at Easter Road, attending virtually every home game. This means leaving his house at 9am on match-days and not getting home until 10pm, although the lateness of his return may have more to do with the after-match 'discussions' in the Hibs Club than the length of the journey.

The 250 mile round trip on the train costs about £40, which is considerable more than his first adventure to Leeds in 1974 to watch Hibs draw 0-0 in the UEFA Cup.

✘ Although he now lives a short distance from the Stadium of Light, and occasionally takes in the odd Sunderland home game, Hugh insists that the experience does not compare to watching the Hibs. He continues: "I've been at a couple of Sunderland games, but to me it's just like going to the pictures. OK there is a decent atmosphere and the football is good, but I have no passion for the teams. I grew up watching the great Hibs team of the seventies, including my all-time favourite player Pat Stanton. The European nights were fantastic, and I remember the atmosphere when we beat Sporting Lisbon 6-1. I also travelled to Leeds when we played them in the UEFA Cup and still have the £3.00 return ticket. Leeds were one of the best sides in Europe at the time but we were better and should have beat them. I've been to four Scottish Cup Finals; 1972, 1979, 2001 and last year, and hopefully this year we can finally win it. I've also been to all the League Cup Finals and seen us win three."

Dan McMichael played a special role in the history of Hibernian Football Club, and many fans were saddened when it was recently discovered that he had been buried in an unmarked grave in the cemetery behind the Famous Five stand.

Born in Ireland in 1865, Dan was a ship's carpenter to trade. He moved to Edinburgh in the mid-1890s where he lived with his brother-in-law, James 'Judge' Murphy. Although he had never played professional football, Dan had been a renowned sprinter in his younger days.

Described as a 'tall, serious-looking man with a bushy moustache who was never known to speak harshly or ungenerously to anyone, Dan joined Hibs a few years later and filled every role from secretary to treasurer, manager to physio, with the highlight being that 1-0 win over Celtic in the Scottish Cup Final which Dan sportingly agreed would be played at Parkhead following a disaster at Ibrox which claimed the lives of 18 supporters at a Scotland v England game a few weeks previously.

Dan's Hibs then won the Glasgow Charity Cup beating Celtic 6-2 which meant that the Easter Road Trophy Room held four pieces of silverware, including the Rosebery Cup and the East of Scotland Cup. The following season Hibs won the League Title for the first time, finishing six points ahead of nearest rivals Dundee.

Dan left his beloved Hibs for a short spell, but returned to lead the club for a further 15 years, after his replacement Phil Kelso left to join Arsenal.

As well as being manager, Dan turned his hand to anything and did odd jobs around the ground when his office commitments finished. One day an English journalist visited Easter Road in search of material for an article, and he spotted what he assumed to be the groundsman painting the goalposts. When he asked where he could find Dan McMichael, the reporter was

astounded when the 'groundsman' replied that he was talking to him.

Whilst he kept the club in a prominent position, especially during the war, Celtic had overtaken Hibs as the preferred club of the Irish community in Scotland.

The two rivals met again in the 1914 Scottish Cup Final, but on this occasion it was Celtic who emerged triumphant, winning 4-1 after a replay, although accounts of the first game suggested that Hibs had been on top and deserved to win.

By the end of the war, Hibs finances were in a sorry state, and the Glasgow based media took great delight in making fun of the faded and worn Hibs jerseys which looked more yellow than green. Their performances were such that an Easter Road chip shop owner, Jock Ward, had taken to offering fans free fish suppers if the team won at home. His profits were safe as the campaign saw just three win in 19 matches.

Dan's story ended tragically in 1919 when he was one of 100 million victims worldwide of Spanish flu possibly having picked up the infection working in the docks at Leith. He collapsed on his way home from Brockville on February 1, 1919, after a 1-1 draw with Falkirk.

Taken home to be with his wife, Jane, at 247 Easter Road, he was confined to bed, where he died peacefully five days later. His funeral was well attended and Hibs directors paid for a wreath in the shape of a broken harp, reflecting the Irish heritage of the manager and the club.

Dan's football philosophy would go down well at Easter Road today, as he was once quoted as saying "I don't need money to bring stars to Easter Road. Hibs bring out their own stars."

Last word goes to Hugh, who has been humbled by the response to his plans, and also the generosity of others so far. He said: "Since the word got out, things have grown, and people

were handing me money at Hampden last weekend, and one woman told me that her family had been buried in an unmarked grave so she knew what it was like, which brought it home to me exactly what this means to people. I've also had friends and workmates texting me to promise a donation, but it's not about me at all, it's about the cause."

Fans can sponsor Mr Cockburn's charity ride by visiting <http://www.hiberniansaintpatricks.co.uk/donate/>