

Hibs offer help for people living with dementia



The Hibernian Historical Trust are looking to expand their successful Football Memories Project which helps men and women living with dementia.

It is a chilling statistic, but over 84,000 people in Scotland have a diagnosis of dementia, which is the equivalent of every spectator on an average Scottish football weekend.

Many of those affected have short term memory problems, but are able to recall events from the past with some clarity, and recognising this, a joint project between Alzheimer Scotland and the Scottish Football Museum at Hampden Park, helps men with dementia by reviving memories of players, matches, goals and incidents from football matches in their younger days.

Around fifty Football Memories groups have been established across Scotland, from the Shetland Isles in the north to Stranraer in the south, where people with dementia and other memory problems gather to enjoy looking back at old photos and memorabilia.

Several key people in Scottish Football have been only too willing to become supporters, including the late great Lawrie Reilly and Peter Cormack from Hibs as well as Sir Alex Ferguson, Craig Brown, Andy Roxburgh, Billy Stark Craig Levine and Willie Miller.

The work is also backed by the Scottish Professional Footballers Association, the Scottish League Managers and Coaches Association and the Scottish Highland League.

The level of detail in the recall of the men attending can be

quite spectacular, and the project aims to record many of the stories which emerge for future use and to avoid part of the nation's football heritage being lost forever..

The project was launched two years ago and trains volunteers to spend time with people with dementia who have an interest in football, talking about teams and matches from the past and working with images and memorabilia to stimulate memories. The project is a partnership between Alzheimer Scotland and the Scottish Football Museum, and is supported by the players of the People's Postcode Lottery and BUPA Care Homes.

So far, hundreds of people with dementia have benefitted from the programme, and a number of relatives have expressed their gratitude to everyone involved. One woman told the organisers: "I drive here with a man with Dementia and I return with my husband," whilst another said: "It's the only time I hear him speak. I can't believe that's him doing all that talking. He doesn't say anything at home except yes and no."

The Hibernian Historical Trust have been holding such meetings within the West Stand of Easter Road Stadium for several months, thanks to the generosity of the club, and such has been the success of the project that organisers are appealing for help from the public to identify people in the early stages of dementia who would benefit from attending.

Club Historian Tom Wright told the Edinburgh Reporter: "We have plenty volunteers willing to help and we are looking to expand our involvement in the programme. Hibs provide excellent facilities and we are keen to help as many men and women as possible. Although the meetings are held in Easter Road, fans of all teams are made welcome, not just Hibs' supporters. In fact, since we started Celtic , Hearts and St Johnstone fans have attended.

"The only stipulation is that we can not guarantee transport so anyone wishing to attend has to make their own way to and

from the stadium although we are happy to accommodate friends or family who want to accompany them.

“Anyone who knows someone who would benefit from our meetings should email curator@hibshistoricaltrust.org.uk for more information.