

Hibs' Football Memories meetings now take place twice each month



Hibernian Historical Trust's Football Memories programme has gone from strength to strength since its formation in 2012 and now due to ever increasing numbers, two meetings are held each month.

Dozens of similar 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. Unlike some other groups however, the meetings held within the West Stand at Easter Road Stadium cater for fans of all teams and not just those of a green and white disposition.

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 people (but more usually these are men) with dementia by reviving memories of players, matches, goals and incidents from football matches in their younger days.

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.

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

Friends, relatives and carers are welcomed and tea, coffee and biscuits are provided free of charge to those attending.

Around 60 people now attend and many have developed new friendships.

Regular quizzes take place and occasionally a film will be shown on the large screen TV. The Scottish Cup also paid a visit and visitors had the opportunity to have their photograph taken with the famous old trophy.

A number of former Hibernian players including Peter Cormack, Alex Cropley, Michael Weir, Neil Martin, John Fraser, Jackie MacNamara and Eric Stevenson have also attended and taken part in question and answer sessions which have proved popular amongst the Hibs fans.

So far, the Trust have organised trips to the Hampden Museum and the Royal Yacht Britannia with more being planned.

Club Historian Tom Wright told The Edinburgh Reporter: "It is a worrying 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.

"The project was launched a few 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.

“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, Rangers, Hearts and St Johnstone fans have attended.

“The only stipulation is that we cannot 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.

“The meetings are held between 11.00 and 12noon on the first and third Monday of the month and refreshments are provided free of charge. Anyone interested should just turn up at the reception in the West Stand.