

A shop window for table tennis at Ocean Terminal

Ocean Terminal Shopping Centre has a new reason to visit – shoppers now have the opportunity to pick up a bat and play some table tennis.

The new Pop in & Play venue has recently opened in one of the units on the ground floor. It is currently open on Saturdays and Sundays, from 11am till 2pm. It is free to play and bats and balls are available – there is no need to fish yours out from the attic. Since opening in early October, several hundred people, of all ages, have played and enjoyed this fast and fun sport at Ocean Terminal.

The Ocean Terminal venue builds on the great success of the existing facility at The Gyle Shopping Centre, which has been open since mid-2019. Volunteers from various Edinburgh table tennis clubs all help out taking sessions. There were 30,000 visits in 2019 and is part of an initiative by the sport's national body, [Table Tennis Scotland](#), to make use of empty units in shopping centres to promote the sport.

Table tennis is often played in unseen venues, such as church halls and schools. As well as these two Edinburgh Pop in & Play venues, a new one will open soon at The Centre, Livingston and more in other parts of Scotland are being planned. It is a great way of showcasing this rapid and highly skilful sport – “a literal shop window for the sport”, as Richard Yule of Table Tennis Scotland has put it. Almost everyone who passes the Pop in & Play looks in, with many stopping for several minutes.



'Pop in & Play' at Ocean Terminal. Photo by Gordon Muir.

Table tennis is an inclusive sport. Most people have tried it at some point in their life, even if it is just a gentle game on holiday. It is also a game which is ideal for the Scottish climate and can be played well by all ages and all degrees of physical ability. The sport has a [proven record](#) in slowing the effects of dementia and Parkinson's. Before the pandemic hit, regular classes were being held in several residential care homes in the Edinburgh area.

The new outlet is an overdue return to Leith for the sport. There has been a lack of table tennis in Leith for several decades. Given the size and population of the area, this has been a serious gap. A club did exist in Leith until the mid 90s, using the forecourt Leisure Centre. More recently, the highly successful social ping pong night Wiff Waff Wednesday, at the Out of the Blue Drill Hall, has demonstrated significant pent-up demand for the game. [Wiff Waff Wednesday](#) has been very successful in attracting people from a wide range of backgrounds and very different age categories. With

its slogan, “friendship first, competition second”, it has emphasised how table tennis can be a fantastically inclusive community sport that brings people together.

The volunteers who run Wiff Waff Wednesday have been involved with coaching, building on the legacy of the Dalmeny Street Drill Hall, which had been a league table tennis venue in the 1950s – a time when participation was particularly high and Scottish tournaments attracted hundreds of players. Table tennis must now compete against a far greater range of sporting and leisure activities but it has great potential to grow. With the good transport links it enjoys and extensive new housing nearby, the Pop in & Play at Ocean Terminal is well placed to assist that growth.



The ‘Pop in & Play’ at Ocean Terminal. Photo by Gordon Muir
The sports venue is housed in a unit previously used by Game, the gaming specialists and [Murrayfield Table Tennis Club](#) have worked with Table Tennis Scotland to get it ready. Fortunately, the laminate floor is ideal while the lighting has been upgraded. The walls have been given a vinyl surface, with the new pastel blue colour ideal for viewing swiftly

moving and viciously spinning table tennis balls.

Though the initial emphasis of Pop in & Play has been on social table tennis, the venue is good enough to host Edinburgh and Lothians League matches. As Murrayfield TTC President Lindsay Muir said: “We are lucky that we have several club members who live nearby, so we put them in a team together. They’ve really enjoyed using the venue for their league encounters.”

This is the Murrayfield Team V, playing in Division One of the [Edinburgh and Lothians League](#). Murrayfield currently play League matches and hold training sessions in five city venues. The Ocean Terminal venue offers the club a place to train at times which suit its members. Murrayfield coach Krzysztof Borkowicz is delighted with the venue, seeing it as a “fantastic place to practice and play matches”. New coach Emma Qu, a sports science PhD student at Edinburgh University, has started running evening classes at Ocean Terminal. These include one session for girls only and two for the local Chinese community.

So whether you’ve never picked a bat before, were a keen player in the past, or are a budding star, get yourself down to Ocean Terminal and Pop in & Play.

Pop in & Play at Ocean Terminal Shopping Centre is currently open from 11am – 2pm, every Saturday and Sunday, for free play.

For further information visit: murrayfieldtt.com and to book evening sessions visit [here](#)