

Murrayfield Table Tennis Club celebrate century

Murrayfield Table Tennis Club is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. In November, Out the Blue in Leith will host a Centenary event, in collaboration with the successful social ping pong event, Wiff Waff Wednesday. The event will include exhibition matches and a performance by LEON the table tennis magician.

As it turns 100, the club is in a particularly healthy state. In the 2021-2022 season it cemented its place as one of Scotland's leading clubs by winning the Edinburgh and Lothians Table Tennis League (ELTTL) Premier Division and finishing runner-up in the Scottish National League. Murrayfield are currently the largest club in the national league with no less than seven teams. In 2022 Murrayfield also participated in the first round of the men's and women's Europe Trophy, run by the European Table Tennis Union.



The Murrayfield Scottish National League Squad 2022 (Photo by Gordon Muir).

Club president, Lindsay Muir, has “never seen the club so busy” with a growing number of players, venues and well qualified coaches. The club currently uses six different venues across the city, offering a “huge range of coaching and training opportunities” to players young and old. These include the two successful ‘Pop in and Play’ venues at the Gyle Shopping Centre and Ocean Terminal, which the club runs in partnership with Table Tennis Scotland (TTS), the sport’s national body. These make use of unused units in shopping centres and, in the words of TTS’s Richard Yule, offer a fantastic ‘shop window for the sport’, as it seeks to raise its profile. As an indoor sport, table tennis suffered during the periods of tight Covid regulations but has revived well since those eased.

Right now, the club is brimming with potential. Coach Krzysztof Borkowicz believes that it has “a very promising group of under 13 players who could make a big impact on the sport”. These include Rory Thomson and Nichole Lee, who was

recently crowned Scottish Primary Schools Champion and also won a silver medal in the British event. She follows in a long line of Murrayfield players who have won National competitions and represented Scotland at an international level. Colin Dalglish spent his early years at the club and was part of the Scottish Commonwealth Games team. The Scottish team in Birmingham was coached and managed by Murrayfield's lead development officer, Gordon Muir.



John Hannah & Calum Morrison (photo by Gordon Muir).
Table tennis by its nature is a very inclusive sport, enjoyed by those of all ages and physical abilities. Murrayfield is committed to expanding the sport by providing access to various different groups. Classes have recently started for the Chinese community, run by Emma Qu, a sports education postgrad at Edinburgh University. Sessions have also started for Sudanese and Ukrainian refugees. There are 13 coaching sessions for kids and 6 senior training sessions run by the club every week, at various venues across the city. Table

tennis has great potential to help people maintain physical and mental health and sharpness and studies have shown it to be effective in counteracting the onset of dementia. The club has also run sessions for the elderly in care homes in Edinburgh and at the Eric Liddell Centre.

Murrayfield Table Tennis Club is the last surviving part of Murrayfield Memorial Club, established in 1922 in memory of locals who died in World War I. The club was formed from the remnants of the Roseburn Boys' Club as a recreational and meeting place for men and boys from the local area. The Memorial Club was particularly active up until the Second World War, providing weekly lectures, slide shows and recreational activities such as chess, bridge, billiards and table tennis.

Having taken part in the wartime leagues, Murrayfield first entered the Edinburgh & District League (as it was then) in the 1945-46 season. This was part of a major expansion of the league in the immediate post-war period (from 46 teams in 1946 to 81 in 1950). At the 1948 club AGM, the club president 'congratulated the TT team on their promotion' to the 2nd Division of the league. By season 1959-60, the table tennis section had become the dominant section of the Murrayfield Memorial Club. It boasted 5 teams and was, by this point, the largest club in the league. It has remained a leading club since.

Since the mid-1980's Lindsay Muir (and more recently his sons Gordon & Graham) have been central to the club organisation and coaching. Muir took over the presidency in 1985 from Bob Sterling, one of the club's longest serving players and administrators, who is still playing at the club at age 79.



Lindsay Muir (left) receives Honorary Life Membership from Table Tennis Scotland's Stewart McGowan (Photo by Gordon Muir). The club has helped produce a number of Scottish internationalists, including Pete Lugton, Colin Roberston, Sarah Hurry, Colin Dalgleish, and Faye Leggett. A large number of Murrayfield players have also represented Scotland at the Home Nations events, at junior, senior and veteran levels.

The club has also won the Edinburgh Evening News and Dispatch Rosebowl (aka the ELTTL Handicap Cup) on 14 occasions (more than any other ELTTL club). This includes 2016/17 when their team of Calum Morrison, Haydn Jackson, and Charlie McGowan had a combined age of just 38! The trio of Colin Dalgleish, Chris

Wheeler and Blair Fowler who constituted the 1st team around 2010-2013 was one of the strongest put out by the club. They had a number of tight tussles with local rivals North Merchiston, who had a powerful team at that time. Chris Wheeler topped the Edinburgh league averages in 2010-11 with 100%; an impressive feat repeated by Calum Morrison, now a senior Scottish internationalist, in 2014-15.



Borui Chen in action (photo by Gordon Muir).

Looking to the future

As the club celebrates its 100th anniversary it looks to build on its impressive results. Murrayfield have been particularly strong in the ELTTL in recent years, winning the Premier Division title 7 times between 2010 and 2022. More importantly, it hopes to help further expand the sport by introducing more people to it. It seeks to exploit table tennis's fundamentally democratic character, accessible to

all.

Murrayfield currently has a good and growing team of able and knowledgeable coaches, passing on their advice. Table tennis in Scotland has an active and a loyal player base but it needs to grow if the sport is to emerge from its 'minor' position. At present, it's somewhat 'behind the curve' in relation to comparable sports, such as badminton, especially in the level of female participation. As it looks forward to the next 100 years, Murrayfield Table Tennis Club is keen to be at the forefront of a significant expansion of the sport. It seeks to raise the profile of the sport and see it realise its potential in terms of promoting physical and mental health.

For more information about the club's various training sessions and venues, visit <https://murrayfieldtt.com/>