

# **Hibernian FC pays tribute to 'saviour' Sir Tom Farmer**

**Hibernian Football Club has paid tribute to the man widely credited for saving the club from going out of existence.**

An emotional statement published on the club's website reads:

"Hibernian FC has lost a huge figure from its history with the passing of Sir Tom Farmer yesterday. He was 84. He had an association with the Club which spanned most of three decades, 25 years of which he was principal shareholder.

"When Sir Tom Farmer looked back on his long association with Hibernian Football Club, his chosen highlight was no surprise. That glorious day – May 21, 2016 – when the Club lifted the Scottish Cup for the first time since 1902 and ended 114 tortuous years.

"The man most supporters view as the modern saviour of their Club understood just how enormous that was. Like so many others, his thoughts turned to those he had known who had dreamed of just such a moment but had never seen it come to pass.

"From his own perspective, the circle had been squared. What had seemed destined never to happen, had come true. And his beloved Leith would celebrate in a way it had not done since the Club last paraded the old trophy, when Sir Tom's Great Uncle Philip Farmer was Club President. The Cup had been won for the second time under his family's watch. It was a source of pride.

“Sir Tom attended the post-match party back at Easter Road, and – as he later told The Scotsman – as he left the Club Chairman Rod Petrie, his friend and colleague, approached. Sir Tom said: “I was leaving with my grandson Adam when Rod said, ‘we’ve got something for you to take home’. I thought it was a present and wondered what it was. I opened it up and it was the Scottish Cup.”

“He took part in and enjoyed the Cup’s victory parade through the city centre and down Leith Walk to the Links on May 22, in glorious sunshine and with huge crowds lining the streets.

“Always keen on the club’s history, Tom recounted that something similar had happened in 1902 as the trophy was paraded: “They met up with a horse-drawn carriage and took it along Princes Street, down Leith Walk to the Duke’s Head in Duke Street, and they had a celebration there. He then took it home and my dad told me it was on the sideboard in pride of place that night.”

“Sir Tom remains revered by Hibernian fans as the man who stepped up to help save the Football Club at its point of greatest crisis. The tale has been well told many times, but in summary Sir Tom was the White Knight who saved the Club from being destroyed by administration and sold off to then Hearts owner Wallace Mercer.

“It wasn’t just the vital funding he put forward to purchase both the Club and the Stadium from the administration of its parent company that endeared him to supporters – it was the campaigning energy and confidence he brought with him at that time in 1990 to add to the huge efforts of supporters ably led by Kenny McLean, Tom O’Malley and Douglas Cromb.

“And when he bought the Club, it was the shares he returned to those who lost their own stakes in the Club because of insolvency, recognising the emotional stake fans had in their Club; after all that had happened that had threatened the

Club's existence, it was his determination to protect the Club's future by insisting it live within his means – although when required, he stepped up to plug gaps and fund progress; and it was his support for the total redevelopment and transformation of a crumbling and unfit for purpose Easter Road Stadium and the creation of a top quality training centre, and all over the almost 30 years in which he first fought to save the Club and then owned it.

“Under his tenure the Club enjoyed sporting success – three cups – and tough times too, with two relegations suffered during his quarter century as principal shareholder. Throughout the highs and lows, his backing for the Club that meant so much to Edinburgh, and Leith in particular, was unwavering.

“In his life Sir Tom had won countless awards and plaudits around the world. He was a Knight of the Realm, and a Papal Knight. He was internationally renowned as a businessman who grew a one-man exhaust firm in Edinburgh to Kwik-Fit, which became a billion-pound enterprise. He was – in what seemed an age of Scottish business giants – a titan. He was also a philanthropist.

“And he was a Hibernian Hall of Fame member, with admittance to a very small club which he greatly appreciated and enjoyed. He understood the enormous part the Club played in the community he loved, and when asked what he had enjoyed most about the club, said: “It was when a mother would stop me in the street and say, ‘Thanks very much for all you’ve done for Hibs’. When I asked why, she said, ‘Because it’s made such a difference to my children’. To have that public recognition, to play a role in keeping the club going, that gave me a lot of satisfaction.”

“Sir Tom received many approaches for the Club, but his mantra remained that he would only sell to the right person, with the right plan, and the right resources. He wanted to ensure that

any future owners would have not only the capacity, but also the motivation, to take the club forward. His last act for the Club came when he found that person in 2019, when he sold his shareholding to Ron Gordon, another successful self-made businessman with a strong sense of family who now continue to demonstrate their commitment.

“While the Club has lost an iconic figure from its history, we also remember that the Farmer family has lost a much-loved father. Our thoughts are with them at this difficult time.

**“RIP Sir Tom, GGTTH.”**