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# Is football bigotry confined to the west of Scotland? The Heart of Midlothian and Hibernian Rivalry

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### **Chapter 3: Is Football Bigotry Confined to the West of Scotland? The Heart of**

#### **Midlothian and Hibernian Rivalry**

John Kelly

#### **Introduction**

Such is the contested nature of ethno-religious bigotry in Scottish football some will question the very inclusion of a chapter on Heart of Midlothian (Hearts) and Hibernian (Hibs) in a collection like this. Yet there has been some perception that Hearts and Hibs form an 'Edinburgh Old Firm' (see Kowalski, 2004). Hognestad (1997) claims some fans of both clubs use sectarian songs and symbols in constructing their imagined identities. Whilst it may be an exaggeration to suggest that the Edinburgh clubs and their fans are a mini Old Firm, equally it would be naive to omit the two capital city clubs from a study of bigotry, football and Scotland. Like their Glasgow counterparts, the Edinburgh clubs' identities have had varying degrees of 'sectarian' associations throughout their respective histories. This is unsurprising given both clubs emerged in a rapidly changing Edinburgh experiencing significant Irish migration to the city. As good sociologists know, we should avoid temptation to *retreat to the present* overlooking crucial historical antecedents for fear of providing inadequately partial accounts (see also the chapters by Bradley, Davies and Flint and Powell).

This chapter, therefore, begins by providing a brief historical overview of both clubs' respective formative years, illustrating how an original Edinburgh camaraderie evolved into local rivalry. Drawing on a number of interviews with fans it then outlines a

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selection of current views from the fans of both clubs, including the fans' perceptions of their own club and of their major relationship with their significant "Other", their rival. This reveals how each club has residual elements of their respective histories impacting on their modern identity. But it also reveals the centrality of Edinburgh as a place in the imagined communities of both clubs. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some modern examples of alleged sectarianism surrounding the Edinburgh clubs and argues that the contrasting approaches Hearts and Hibs fans have in embracing their respective pasts reveals broader insights into common perceptions surrounding 'sectarianism' in Scotland beyond Edinburgh football fans.

### **The formative years of the Edinburgh clubs**

The founding of Hearts is officially recorded as 1874, but evidence suggests they were formed in the autumn of 1873 at Washing Green Court in the Canongate area of Edinburgh (Mackie 1959; Alexander 2003). There is further ambiguity surrounding the origins of the club name, with the official accounts claiming it took its name from the Royal Mile dance hall frequented by its founders, while Alexander (2003) claims that Heart of Midlothian was chosen in honour of Walter Scott's 1818 novel of the same name<sup>i</sup>. The distinction is negligible, as both would presumably have been named after the Tolbooth. Hearts joined the Scottish league in 1875 and quickly established itself as a major club, winning its first trophy in 1878 against Hibs in the final of the Edinburgh FA Cup. Hearts, perhaps more than any other club, encapsulates a dual British-Scottish

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identity that has developed since their early days and their associations with McCrae's Battalion (the 16<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots British Army battalion).

*Kaiser Bill he came marching o'er Belgium and France*

*To challenge the Empire with warlike advance.*

*But the bravest of Hearts volunteered for the fray*

*And threw in their lot with old Geordie McCrae!*

*Come pack up your footballs and scarves of maroon.*

*Leave all your sweethearts in Auld Reekie toon.*

*Fall in wi' the lads for they're off and away*

*To take on the bold Hun with old Geordie McCrae!"*

(cited in Alexander 2003: 134 – 135).

On 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1914, during the initial stages of the First World War when joining up was still voluntary, eleven Hearts players enlisted in McCrae's Battalion after a certain amount of pleading from the Hearts board of directors to 'remove the slur on the professional game' (Alexander 2003: 74). Following the successful plea for players, the club extended their official request to their supporters:

The Board of Directors of Heart of Midlothian Football Club hereby make a strong appeal to their supporters to join Sir George McCrae's Battalion... The

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players have shown the way and it is now up to the other sections named to complete the requisite number ... Heart of Midlothian applicants are requested to state when enlisting that they wish to be included in the Hearts Company. Now then, young men, as you have followed the old club through adverse and pleasant times, through sunshine and rain, roll up in your hundreds for King and Country, for right and freedom (cited in Alexander 2003: 81 – 82).

This official club call to arms for King and Country was an immediate success during a period marked by widespread castigation of the ever-increasing professional football for its alleged malevolent influence on the nation's youth (Alexander 2003). Allowing us insight into the hegemonic influences of the day, contemporary newspapers carried the following appeal:

I say to the young men in this ancient capital and free country: *You are Strong; Be Willing!* ... If only you will come forward in sufficient numbers you can stop the war. All cannot go, but if your home ties permit, and you shirk your obvious duty, you may escape a hero's death, but you will go through your life feeling mean (cited in Alexander 2003: 76, original emphasis).

McCrae's Battalion itself had footballing and 'sectarian' antecedents, being formed out of the remnants of the Third Edinburgh Rifle Volunteers (3<sup>rd</sup> ERV) whose football team, established in 1874, became the first Edinburgh club. Led by John Hope, a

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Protestant who campaigned in favour of temperance and anti-Catholicism, the instantly successful 3<sup>rd</sup> ERV club's membership was confined to members of the corps who were 'specially selected Protestants, chosen on the basis of their "good character", as defined by dual commitment to No-Popery and abstension' (Finn 1994: 98).

The connection between the club and McCrae's was cemented further in 1919 when the club issued complementary season tickets to around one hundred survivors of McCrae's Battalion, with the front cover inscription: 'These men went to fight for King and Country ... they are welcomed back to Tynecastle' (cited in Alexander 2003: 268).

In more recent times this has continued with the club, helped by fan contributions, erecting a war memorial to the "Heart of Midlothian fallen", which was unveiled at Haymarket (see the chapter by Flint and Powell for further discussion). Additionally, the club organised the annual Armistice Day ceremony up until the 1960s when they began leaving it to the Salvation Army. These links to McCrae's Battalion and the events of the First World War were rekindled by the release of the compact disc single "Hearts of Glory" which was officially advertised and endorsed by Hearts FC in the spring of 2004. Proceeds from the sales went towards the memorial fund.

Hearts' rivals Hibs were formed in 1875<sup>ii</sup> by members of the St Mary's Street branch of the Catholic Young Men's Society (CYMS) under the chairmanship of Irish-born Canon Hannan (Finn, 1994; Lugton, 1999)<sup>iii</sup>. Their formation was inextricably linked to the mass immigration of Irish Catholics to Edinburgh during the nineteenth century. Upon arriving into Edinburgh, many Irish settled in the slums of the Cowgate area of the Old Town, and gradually developed their own 'Little Ireland' (Lugton 1999).

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Little Ireland and the Port of Leith rapidly became associated with the Irish migrants. Shortly after the opening of Little Ireland's first Catholic church in 1835, 16,000 of Edinburgh's 133,000 population were Irish and by 1848 Leith's population included almost 2000 Irish (ibid). By the mid-nineteenth century thirty percent of the Old Town population were Irish-born, with 25,000 in Little Ireland. Although at the time of the club's formation the Catholic Irish represented less than ten percent of Edinburgh's population, they were a significant minority who had developed their own sub-culture, becoming, as Lugton (1999: 18) suggests, 'Hibernicis ipsis Hiberniores: 'more Irish than the Irish.'

Hibs were the first prominent "Irish club" in Scotland, and initially, their players had to be practising Catholics (Lugton, 1999). The club's first secretary Mal Byrne drew up the rules of the new club on a document carrying the Harp and motto 'Erin-go-bragh', (Irish Gaelic for 'Ireland forever', Mackay, 1986). Lugton (1999) records that Hibernian was chosen in honour of the 'Ancient Order of the Hibernians' which had been absorbed into the CYMS. Hibs quickly established itself as a major Edinburgh club with rapid success ensuing. This rapid success probably contributed to the club's problematic relationship with other Scottish clubs and associations in its formative years. Both the local Edinburgh FA and the newly formed Scottish FA refused to allow Hibs entry to their associations (Mackay 1986; Finn 1994; Lugton 1999). Furthermore, the Edinburgh FA issued instructions to its existing members to refrain from playing any matches against Hibs (Lugton 1999). Demonstrating an early example of comradeship to its eventual rivals, Hearts agreed to play Hibs on Christmas Day, 1875 (Lugton 1999).

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Throughout the 1880s there was widespread debate regarding whether Hibs' Scottish born players should represent Scotland or Ireland. Mackay (1986: 4) quotes a contemporary account taken from the *Scottish Football Annual*. Referring to the SFA, it states: 'That body, thus early displaying a spirit which has all along marked their dealings with the Hibernians, *refused them admission*. 'The Association was formed for Scotchmen' said they in effect' Original emphasis).

Finn (1994) suggests that part of the reason for Hibs' early league membership refusals can be attributed to opposition from the Edinburgh FA, probably as a direct result of the influence of the powerful (and original) Edinburgh football club, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ERV. Finn (1994: 91), who illustrates the anti-Catholic culture associated with the 3<sup>rd</sup> ERV, describes this opposition as revealing 'the extent to which religion, nationalism, militarism, politics and anti-Catholicism had a potent influence on Scottish football.' Mackay (1986: 4) records how in 1876, it was only after a petition was signed on its behalf by all the prominent players in Edinburgh, that 'Hibs were reluctantly admitted into the SFA.'

Notably, until 2005 when the club began serialising Lugton's three-book collection, the official Hibs website explanation of the club's formation stated 'our club was founded by Irish born football enthusiasts [but] Hibernian immediately became fully integrated into the Edinburgh community'. Not only was there no reference to Catholicism – exclusively Catholic players in the early days, or Cannon Hannan's and the CYMS's involvement – but the early difficulties encountered by the club in attempting to



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join the Edinburgh and Scottish football associations had been historically revised. The result was that both Catholic associations (and exclusivity) and the local and national opposition to their football association membership, were overlooked by the modern day (official) club historians.

### *The beginnings of the Edinburgh rivalry*

The wider 'Edinburgh community' was not quite as welcoming as the official club account suggests. In addition to the 3rd ERV influence within the Edinburgh FA, Hearts' original hand of friendship was supplanted by two official protests lodged to the football authorities. The first one sought to prevent Hibs from competing in the prestigious Edinburgh Cup (Mackay 1986). The second protest occurred after Hibs defeated Hearts in the Edinburgh Cup with Hearts protesting that Hibs had a player who was 'not local' (Mackay 1986: 22). This set the tone for the next century, with both clubs becoming major rivals.

The extent to which these respective origins continue to influence and shape modern fan identities is debateable. In attempting to understand this we now turn attention to the fans themselves, allowing them to express their club identities in contemporary times.

### **Fans' perspectives**

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The following fans' accounts form part of a larger on-going study that began in 2004. A number of fans from both clubs were interviewed. Some interviews were individual, some group and others took the form of unplanned, unstructured, opportunistic 'interview-as-talk' (Spradley 1979) interviews like those often conducted in ethnographic research environments. All interactions occurred between 2004 and the present day. Unless stated, opinions expressed here were shared by some other fans of each respective club, allowing some corroborating evidence to exist. Whilst it is always problematic generalising too much with small samples, these views are the perspectives of existing fans of both clubs and therefore undeniably represent some fans' perceptions of both clubs. A range of ages and both male and female respondents were interviewed.

### *Ethno-religious and national identities*

Whilst both sets of fans generally tried to stress that the Edinburgh rivalry was not a mini Old Firm, analysing their views exposes subtle elements of religious, ethnic and national identities emerging. One Hearts fan illustrates these subtleties by first stating: "Hearts and Hibs hate each other but there's not the same bitterness [as the Old Firm] and the rivalry is very much a football rivalry."

But he later inadvertently reveals it *is* more than mere football rivalry, stating his reasons for viewing Hearts as Edinburgh's premier club as being linked to Hibs' Irish links: "Maybe it's the Irish connection with Hibs and the roots they came fae' and everything else ... Hearts were formed in Edinburgh, by Edinburgh people."

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Both sets of fans generally agreed that there are some sections of both supporters' groups that contribute to the *impression* of both clubs being a mini Old Firm. Most fans admitted that Hearts are or have been perceived as a 'Protestant club' and Hibs as a 'Catholic/Irish-Catholic club'. The majority of Hearts fans interviewed expressed the view that in some ways Hearts and Hibs are a smaller and less bigoted version of their Glasgow counterparts, as illustrated in the following example: "A lot of Hearts supporters can become sectarian ... there is a lot of Union Jacks that fly about and what have you ... but that's just the way they have been."

In agreeing that Hearts and Hibs can sometimes be perceived to be an 'Edinburgh Old Firm', another Hearts fan notes:

They probably are but I wish they weren't. Because Rangers and Celtic and the reasons they hate each other, that is not what football is about. Football is about competing for football, not about religion ... but there is a certain aspect in our support and the same with Hibs fans who take it to that level.

Reflecting common themes among the Hibs fans, one Hibs fan adds:

Some people see Hibs and Hearts as a mini Rangers and Celtic, with Hibs being the Catholic team and Hearts being the Protestants. I can't speak for Hearts but I mean when I went to my school all the lads that supported them (Hibs) were all

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Protestants. Hibs have a unique identity in that they came ye' know they've got this Irish heritage that they were founded by you know, basically by Irish immigrants but that the difference between us and Celtic is we're proud of our history and we've got it there but we don't let it sort of impact on the present if ye' like. I don't think you could identify that Hibs have got a Catholic support as opposed to a Protestant support ... Hibs are not seen as a Catholic club by Hibs fans ... the religious aspect disnae' come into it in any way shape or form. I can state that without fear of contradiction.

Some Hearts fans suggested that Hibs are still, to some extent, seen to be representative of an Irish-Catholic identity. Another Hearts fan notes that some Hibs supporters wear Republic of Ireland tops to matches, but he viewed this as not having 'religious' or 'sectarian' undertones:

You still get Hibs supporters that go to the game with the Republic of Ireland tops on... not to be inflammatory or anything like that, but just because they wear them as sort of leisure tops. And I think because there is probably a small percentage of Hibs supporters, hmmm that possibly because of their family and the family roots as much as the club roots and everything else, will have a sort of sneaking sympathy for the Republic of Ireland.

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Another Hearts fan, however, emphasises the religious connotations some Hearts fans attach to Hibs fans wearing Republic of Ireland tops or even the wearing of green, stating: "To the wider Hearts supporters it's [green] seen as Catholic. Some Hibs fans see it like that too. You'll see some of them going to football matches with Ireland tops on and stuff like that."

It was overwhelmingly agreed by both sets of fans that sections of Hibs and Hearts fans continue waving Irish Tricolours and Union Flags at each other and sometimes due to religious and national identity reasons. Most Hearts respondents agreed that Hibs supporters fly the Irish Tricolour more widely during matches with Hearts and Rangers whom they believe Hibs fans view as British-Protestant clubs. The wider Hearts support were viewed by their own fans to share a mild preference for Rangers over Celtic, which some Hearts fans explained was linked to the perceived similarities between Hearts and Rangers in their political and religious identity markers. The clearest expression of this came from a fan who also illustrated the accompanying perception that Celtic and Hibs share aspects of their respective identities:

Some fans, maybe a lot of Hearts fans think there's a connection between Hearts and Rangers. They think that because, well they used to think that anyway because it used to be Hibs and Celtic and then it's Hearts and Rangers. Hearts and Rangers are the two Protestant clubs and Hibs, Celtic are the two Catholic clubs. When Hearts visit Ibrox there are virtually no police there. And you can walk through the Rangers fans. And when you go to Celtic Park, we are cordoned off

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and we are marched to our bus ... they hate Hearts fans because they see us as a little Rangers. And with Hibs it's the other way about. ... I see Rangers as not as bad as Celtic ... I hate Celtic much more than I do Rangers ... it's maybe just because of the Hearts Rangers thing, because we sing one of their songs. Rangers fans and Hearts fans have a special thing with their scarves ... They share some of their songs, they're both Protestant as well ... originally.

Many fans of both clubs demonstrated that supporter behaviour depends largely upon the perceived identity of the opposition. For example, a majority of Hearts fans explained that against Celtic more unionist symbols and songs will be utilised against the perceived Irish-Catholic Celtic supporters. "I think in many cases the Hearts fans will sing songs back that they would never consider singing under any other circumstances." One fan highlights the flying of the Union Flag by Hearts supporters, noting a section of them will: "bring those flags out against Celtic and no' against anybody else ... I suppose it's for them to hold onto their British identity."

This modified behaviour occurs against Rangers too but with a different identity constructed to suit the preferred impression being fostered for the particular audience – the Hearts supporters construct a more Scottish-centred identity against the perceived Ulster-British identity attributed to Rangers:

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The Hearts fans sing Flower of Scotland when the Rangers fans sing Rule Britannia. We sing Flower of Scotland to show we are a Scottish club and that. See, that's all it is, they sing God Save the Queen and Rule Britannia and all this.

Explicitly illustrating this impression management maintained by Hearts supporters, this fan adds: "the only time ye' hear Flower of Scotland getting sung by Hearts fans is when it's in retaliation to a Rangers song."

It was agreed by all fans that a section of Hearts supporters fly the Union Flag primarily at matches involving Hibs and Celtic as a way of reinforcing their Scottish-British identity against a perceived (Irish-Catholic) 'Other'. All respondents agreed that Hearts are perceived by others as well as by many of their own supporters as being 'more British' in their identity than most other clubs. One Hearts fan remarked: "I mean they are British and the [Hearts] supporters like to get that over to people."

Although sharing aspects of a British Protestant identity, the type of unionism linked to Hearts and Rangers differed (see Bradley and McKillop in this volume for further discussion about Rangers' Protestant identity). Some Hearts fans explicitly suggested that Hearts' Britishness is Scottish-British as opposed to Rangers' which they see as more Ulster-British. Some fans explained that although some Union Flags are present at European away matches, most Hearts supporters prefer to display the Scottish Saltire when playing abroad. It was suggested their Scottish identity becomes reinforced abroad as a result of being 'foreign' and the desire of the Hearts supporters to portray

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Scottish football supporters in a positive light. Other Hearts fans emphasised the Scottish dimension to the club's British identity, as neatly summarised by one fan:

I would say there is more a sense of Scottishness than a sense of Britishness. I would say the Britishness thing goes in cycles. I think it tends to revolve around other circumstances and what is happening elsewhere, whether it's a war or whether it's the Gulf conflict or whatever ... I would say if you were to ask ninety-percent of Hearts supporters, the badge has a St. Andrews cross in it and that's not coincidence.

The divergent British Unionism between Hearts and Rangers was perhaps most sharply illustrated by one fan's comments regarding whether or not the Hearts supporters display the Red Hand of Ulster flag:

There is an Ulster Hearts supporters club who did have a Red Hand of Ulster flag. They stopped bringing it because Hearts asked them to. But they did have a flag, 'Ulster Hearts' which people took exception to as well. It was a Hearts flag with Ulster Hearts. I remember it at East End Park a couple of years ago and the flag had to get taken down. Well it was at East End Park and some Hearts fans mibee were seeing something that wisnae' there, coming to the conclusion that anything with any association with Ulster may have other ulterior motives. I dinnae' see the



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Red Hand of Ulster very often. Mibee one or two maximum at a big game but the Union Jack is more prevalent than any Red Hand of Ulster.

### *City rivalry*

Whilst competing (perhaps opposing) national identities remain part of the fabric of the Edinburgh clubs' sense of self (and in relation to others), a local geographical habitus emerged in the views expressed by most fans of both clubs with the importance of Edinburgh and Leith<sup>iv</sup> appearing significant. One Hearts fans explained the rivalry with Hibs was based largely on coming from: "different sides of Edinburgh, with the outskirts and west of Edinburgh tending to be populated by Hearts fans while Hibs fans largely reside in the east of the city." Another Hearts fan added: "Hearts are as big a part of the city as the castle. When I was growing up it always seemed to me that Hearts were Edinburgh's team. Even the colours of the buses were maroon."

Just as Hearts fans viewed Edinburgh as central to their sense of club identity, a number of Hibs fans viewed their modern identity and rivalry with Hearts in geographical, rather than religious or ethnic, terms. Representing a common position, one Hibs fan noted:

Leith is seen as having a separate identity from Edinburgh ... and people from Leith regard themselves as sort ... of separate, as totally separate from Edinburgh. 'Leithers' is what everybody's called. So Hibs play in Leith now and I think it is

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important that if ye' ever move the club from this area of Edinburgh, I think the club would die pretty rapidly.

Another Hibs fan sums up the duality of Leith and Edinburgh for Hibs fans noting:

It's another part of the Hibs dual identity ... is that they are seen as this big Leith club and they are in many ways. Yet they come from the Cowgate and their traditional support was always from the Southside of Edinburgh which was where the Irish immigrant population lived.

Although cursory analysis of some fans' comments suggests a geographically-focused identity, on closer inspection the geographical habitus occasionally incorporates ethno-religious dimensions which intersect the stated geographical identities expressed by both clubs. For example, one Hearts fan stresses:

For me it [Hearts] was the club that identified with Edinburgh whereas Hibs were in Leith ... oh they're from Leith ... so as far as I'm concerned Hearts is Edinburgh's club. Hibs came later. I dunno, maybe it's the Irish connection with Hibs and the roots they came fae' and everything else. I mean Hearts were formed in Edinburgh, Edinburgh people and it's a bit of that I think.

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The obvious implication therefore is that Hearts and its supporters are seen by this fan as the established group while Hibs and its supporters are seen as outsiders as a result of “coming from Leith”, “having an Irish connection”, and “not being formed in Edinburgh for Edinburgh people. Most fans of both clubs viewed each other as the major rival, though a significant minority within both groups viewed either Celtic, Rangers or both Glasgow clubs as the major rival. Curiously, for some (among both clubs), even when their Edinburgh rival was noted to be the major rival, they sometimes preferred their major rival to win against the Glasgow clubs.

While some Hearts fans admitted that most Hearts fans view Rangers and Celtic as important rivals – with Celtic being slightly bigger rivals – most Hearts fans were certain that Hibs are *the* major rival and the team most Hearts supporters like to beat. Most Hibs fans agreed that Hearts are the primary rival. One Hibs fan explained: “I suppose the biggest rivals have got to be Hearts simply because they come from the same city. So I think your biggest rivals are going to be your local rivals.”

Some of the Hibs fans perceive the Edinburgh rivalry as being intensified in recent years due to the aborted amalgamation of Hearts and Hibs, which some Hibs fans see as a failed takeover<sup>v</sup>. One fan commented:

For a lot of Hibs fans, myself included, if ye' finish above Hearts then that's success for a season. Ye' want Hibs to win all the time and Hearts to get beat all the time and there's this added animosity since they tried to put us out of business

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in 1990. But eh, it's down to eh, they are 'the Other' (emphasis) without any shadow of a doubt.

There was evidence of an imagined Edinburgh-Glasgow rivalry impacting on fan allegiances. Some Hearts fans conceded: "more and more Hearts fans dislike both Celtic and Rangers as much as Hibs. And a lot of Hearts fans will say they hate Rangers just as much as they hate Celtic." However, one fan's alternative position was occasionally shared. When asked who Hearts' biggest rivals were, he emphatically stated: "Celtic. In my eyes it's Celtic. I'd rather be a Hibs fan than a Celtic fan. Ninety nine percent of [Hearts] fans agree that Celtic are the major other."

Demonstrating a common view, a number of Hearts fans claimed that most fellow fans would rather see rival club Hibs beat Celtic or Rangers in a hypothetical cup final. One fan noted:

Now, if it came to Rangers or Celtic playing Hibs in a cup final, I'm not sure how that would work out. I think most of them (Hearts supporters) would have a sneaky feeling in the back of their minds that they would actually like to see Hibs win it.

Other Hearts fans endorsed the view that they would rather see local rivals Hibs beat Celtic. But when asked about Rangers (playing Hibs), a small number admitted they

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would prefer Rangers to win. Some Hibs fans also viewed their Edinburgh rivals favourably. Even when noting Hearts as the primary local rival, they expressed a large degree of camaraderie with them, subsequently viewing both Rangers and Celtic as the primary 'Other': I actually see Hibs and Hearts as two sides of the same coin and actually if I had to tell you who did I, if you were talking about disliking more, I would say Rangers or Celtic." A fellow Hibs fan agreed: "Yeah, ye' hate the Old Firm more than ye' hate Hearts." However, clarifying her position, she added:

I would rather see the Old Firm get beat because it's always funny ... I actually don't mind the ... the Hearts fans are like Hibs fans in a lot of ways. They could go through to Ibrox and Parkhead like half the people in Scotland do but they don't, so you've got to give them some kind of respect for that.

Paradoxically then, though some Hearts and Hibs fans concede their Edinburgh rivals are their main 'Other', these fans simultaneously express a large degree of camaraderie with the Other to such an extent that they prefer to see them win against either Celtic or Rangers. Attributing reasons for this is difficult and may be more related to a perceived joint Edinburgh unity in imagined opposition to the Glasgow clubs as much as it might be due to ethno-religious factors. The general antipathy towards Celtic and Rangers was evident throughout all of the interviews with both sets of fans, with a small minority of Hearts fans reserving it exclusively for Celtic and a small minority of

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Hibs fans reserving it exclusively for Rangers. Noting the particularly intense rivalry with Rangers a Hibs fan adds:

I don't say Hibs are any angels in this. There is a section of Rangers fans who know that the club (Hibs) is from an Irish background and they know that there are people who support Hibs who are Catholic and perhaps they may even attend Church, but the perception is that they are Catholic. And given the nature that Rangers is predominantly a club that people who are Protestant will tend to support, they will come with the intention of winding Hibs fans up ... And when Rangers start singing songs that they know will antagonise the Hibs fans, when they start singing things like Rule Britannia and singing the Sash they do it because they want to wind Hibs fans up.

There was an overwhelming belief in the Glasgow clubs' collective culpability for 'sectarianism' with many Hearts and Hibs fans expressing the opinion that many (sometimes "the majority") of Rangers and Celtic fans were 'sectarian'. A Hibs fan captures this fully:

We're now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and people are still.... I'm talking about both Rangers and Celtic here, ye' know the obscentity of still fighting battles that happened three or four hundred years ago just does ma' head in to be honest with ye'. Jack McConnell summed it up calling it Scotland's Shame... The people that

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attach themselves to the two Glasgow clubs continue to promote it every Saturday and ye' go to Ibrox where ye' have the obscenity of going to see the Scottish people wearing England football shirts and singing the songs, even promoted by the club. Ye' used to have Andy Cameron coming on five minutes before the game and he leads a sing song flying the Union Jacks and they play a medley of songs over the loudspeakers and it's the Dambusters and the Great Escape. And they used to have a fucking German goalie. And it's the same when ye' go to Parkhead ... the bigot brothers, i'm afraid they've certainly destroyed Scottish football to a certain extent and they are a blight on Scottish society as far as i'm concerned.

In addition to the 'bigot brothers' label, some Hibs fans perceive Celtic supporters to be patronising towards Hibs. One Hibs fan comments that Celtic fans "treat us like their little Irish brothers." Another adds:

I think that Celtic see it almost patronising slightly at times if ye' like. Ye' know they see ye' as their wee cousins if ye' like, ye' know their wee cousins from Edinburgh because we play in green and white or some crap like that.

Although it seems fair to assert that for Hearts and Hibs the ethno-religious dynamic is distinct from and less obvious than that exhibited in Glasgow between the Old Firm, it does continue lurking in the construction of imagined identities (and differences)

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for some of the Edinburgh clubs' supporters. But it appears that most fans of both clubs view their self and intra-city rival in Edinburgh terms first and ethno-religious terms second if at all. What is clear, however, is that both clubs occasionally reveal elements of their ethno-religious past and this is as likely to occur against the Glasgow clubs as it is against their own Edinburgh rivals.

### **Mapping the field in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

In recent years, there have been some instances involving fans of the Edinburgh clubs that could be interpreted as 'sectarian' in nature. In April 2005, a minute silence for Pope John Paul II was disrupted by Hearts supporters to such an extent that it was cut short by more than half (Stow 2005). Subsequently some Hearts supporters' spokespeople refused to condemn the actions of the Hearts supporters (Stow 2005). In more recent times, sections of Hearts supporters have worn scarves and t-shirts to matches decorated with Ulster Loyalism images, displayed Red Hand of Ulster flags and the Union Flag<sup>vi</sup>, and in some cases aligned themselves with the British National Party (Jardine 2002). There has also been an apparent increase in fan tensions recently when Celtic play Hearts<sup>vii</sup>. Although it is unwise to ascribe definite motives for these acts, it is reasonable to consider the possibility that some are linked to sectarianism.

With regard to the Edinburgh derby, in April 2011, a month after the so-called 'shame game' between Celtic and Rangers which precipitated the eventual Offensive



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Behaviour Bill, Hibs played Hearts at Easter Road in a controversial derby. Pre-match, Hibs' player Richie Towell (on-loan from Celtic) had angered some by claiming the alleged abuse he received from Hearts fans was worse than he experienced from Rangers fans and that it was linked to being an Irish Catholic (see Scotsman 2011). In a match that resulted in twenty fans being ejected for "unruly behaviour" and three stadium arrests, scores of Hearts fans encroached onto the pitch at one point and around a dozen missiles were thrown from Hibs fans towards Hearts players taking throw-ins and corners in one part of the ground<sup>viii</sup>. Hibs fans goaded Hearts' star player singing en-masse 'Rudi Skacel's a fucking refugee' while the Hearts fans responded with their Gorgie Boys adaptation of the banned Billy Boys with the proscribed line 'we're up to our knees in Fenian blood'. One Hibs fan had his Irish Socialist-Republican Starry Plough flag confiscated by police inside the stadium. Even before the match a small group of around thirty Hearts fans congregated outside a pub on Easter Road and sang the "famine song" asking the Irish descendants in Scotland 'why don't you go home?' What this reveals is rather contradictory. On the one hand, the Edinburgh rivalry is about Edinburgh, Gorgie and Leith and is a local rivalry based on geographical factors. Whilst on the other hand, for some within both clubs, sectarian elements remain.

It is true that the Edinburgh rivalry is not a mini Old Firm. It is also probably true that the vast majority of both clubs' fans place little or any importance on ethno-religious factors when imagining their respective identities. But there are dormant ethno-religious tensions that occasionally awaken, reminding us of both clubs' past and their lingering contemporary significance in particular situations. Whilst some Hearts fans have a

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stronger antipathy towards Celtic than Rangers (some even preferring Hibs to Celtic) and some Hibs fans have a stronger antipathy towards Rangers than Celtic, most fans of both Edinburgh clubs disdainfully view both Celtic and Rangers equally, labelling them the bigot brothers, Scotland's Shame or the non-sectarian but equally pejorative "slum dwelling weegies"<sup>ix</sup>.

Hibs fans tend to oscillate between either viewing the club's Irish-Catholic identity as having little place in modern Edinburgh/Scotland or having some (as yet) unarticulated part to play in the modern club. For example, the former position is characterised by some who actively seek to avoid any association for fear of being 'sectarian':

Although there is the Irish heritage ... you don't have to go in for all that plastic Paddy stuff to be a Hibs fan. In fact most people are actually anti-that. They see themselves as an Edinburgh club. And with an Edinburgh identity and Scottish despite the roots ... Hibs did actually turn away from that quite early on in their existence. They've been a lot quicker to let go of that kind of background than certain other clubs in Scotland. And I must admit that's one of my pet hates. I can't stand sectarianism or racism in any form at all. And if I felt the club was going down that route in any way I would be disillusioned with it. In the modern day Edinburgh club the Irish Tricolour has no place. The whole Irish ... I don't think it does Hibs any favours.

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However, other Hibs fans who also agreed that the Irish-Catholic identity has little place in the modern club were less concerned that it might be perceived to be sectarian, but rather view it as an undeniable anachronism:

Given the history of the club coming from the Catholic community of Edinburgh and also from the Irish community ... it's seen as being in the past, part of the Irish community and part Catholic, but today I think, given the nature of Edinburgh and society, I think that is a historical part of the club. And I think you will find that when people support Hibs, anything that has to do with religion is not seen as such a big part of it.

There remains, however, some Hibs fans who wish to embrace the club's Irish-Catholic identity. This ranges from those who wish to give a lukewarm, cautious welcome to those who would emphasise the political contexts more openly. Well known Hibs fan Charlie Reid captures the former position:

I'm glad the club is acknowledging its roots – in the past there's been some reluctance to do so. The club is now at peace with its culture in a way that maybe some other clubs are not and I would like to see more done to acknowledge our history, without that 'greeting into a beer glass' thing that so persists at Celtic ... As a Scottish football club with Irish roots, that identity should be celebrated and integrated into what we all are as Hibs supporters (cited in MacVannan 2011: 23).

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Capturing the latter position clearly, Jim Slaven notes:

We need to create a space where Hibs can acknowledge its origins and those who want to can express their ethnicity, within the football stadium and within Edinburgh, without feeling somehow that they are doing something wrong or that it's illegitimate ... The people who complain about the tricolour being flown at football games are the same people who would tell you there isn't any anti-Irish racism or that there isn't any sectarianism (cited in MacVannan 2011: 78-79).

There is an uneasiness around embracing Hibs' Irish-Catholic linkages, with some fans describing feeling like 'an embarrassing uncle', whilst no such fear or embarrassment exists among the Hearts fans' embracing of their club's history. Hearts fans appear more comfortable and open about recognising their historical development and original traditions than Hibs fans, with McCrae's Battalion occupying a position of legitimacy that Irish-Catholic signifiers struggle to achieve in Scotland.

## **Conclusions**

These fan relationships with the past and their respective collective representations in the present encapsulate some of the broader attitudes towards 'sectarianism' beyond the confines of Edinburgh. It is clear that many of the views expressed by these fans reflect

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and reinforce some of the dominant themes around 'sectarianism' in Scotland, with Irish-Catholic and Ulster-Loyalist symbols being anchored in sectarian terms, making their legitimacy in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scotland problematic for many.

'Sectarianism' is viewed by most fans of the Edinburgh clubs as someone else's problem or to be precise, a Glasgow/West problem sustained by the 'bigot brothers' of Rangers and Celtic (clubs and fans, see Rosie's chapter for similar findings). Whilst a very small minority of Hibs and Hearts fans continue to embrace sectarianized elements of their clubs' identities, this presents problems for much of their combined wider support and reveals yet more common (and officially endorsed) attitudes towards ethno-religious identities and power dynamics beyond Edinburgh football culture, with a core hegemonic 'we' identity encouraged and legitimised in favour of the pejoratively viewed 'sectarian' Irish/Ulster identities. This selective construction of the imagined communities of Hibs and Hearts camouflages the reality of tradition, heritage, identity and legacy being contested terrain with selection/omission, location/dislocation and legitimising/demonising discourses occurring. Billig (1996: 2) reminds us that:

To hold an attitude is to take a stance in a matter of controversy. The meaning of the stance derives both from what is being supported and from what is being rejected... An argument for an issue of controversy is also an argument *against* counter-views... [A]ffirmation and negation are intertwined, as the logoi of discourse are also anti-logoi, to be understood in relation to the context of controversy (original emphasis).

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There is a legitimatised non-sectarian identity promoted at the expense of alternative ethnic, religious and political identities that, for some, are equally meaningful, relevant and legitimate.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Alexander (2003: 311) claims that 'Heart of Midlothian's grasp of its own history leaves much to be desired.'

<sup>ii</sup> Some of this Hibs section was originally published as part of an article by the author published in *Sport in Society* in 2007 and entitled 'Hibernian Football Club: The Forgotten Irish?' Copyright permission has been granted.

<sup>iii</sup> Mackay (1986) states that it was the Young Men's Catholic Association, (YMCA).

<sup>iv</sup> Leith was an independent municipal burgh prior to its incorporation within the city of Edinburgh.

<sup>v</sup> In 1990 the then Chairman of Hearts, the late Wallace Mercer, made a £6.2m bid to take over Hibs. Resistance to the move, sparked by fears of an amalgamation and the ending of the individual identities of the two clubs, resulted in the high profile 'Hands off Hibs' campaign. Mercer's attempt to form a united Edinburgh team was eventually defeated.

<sup>vi</sup> In the last four years I have attended a number of Hearts matches – against Hibs and Celtic – and have witnessed all of these symbols being displayed among a small minority of Hearts fans.

<sup>vii</sup> This is undoubtedly linked to the Green Brigade banner criticizing the Earl Haig poppy being placed on the Celtic shirt. Hearts fans more than most reacted to this and the subsequent Hearts v Celtic fixtures were among the most heated in recent times. Numerous references to British forces and 'Heroes' and 'remembrance' and numerous Red Hand and Union Flags were visible among the Hearts fans and Celtic fans chanted

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anti-poppy slogans and “I, IRA, Irish Republican Army” in a manner very uncommon in recent years.

<sup>viii</sup> I attended the match and witnessed this clearly as I was in the same section where it occurred.

<sup>ix</sup> A general non-‘sectarian’ Edinburgh-Glasgow rivalry was expressed by both groups of fans and is an additional layer of identification and rivalry that cannot be expanded upon here due to space.