

Hail! Hail!

Classic Celtic Old Firm Clashes

Martin Hannan



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*To my brother Stephen, keeper of the faith our father gave
us.*

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FOREWORD

Like any Celtic fan, I love it when we beat Rangers. Conversely, I absolutely hate it when we lose to them. It's the same for everyone involved with the Old Firm, no matter what side you are on.

To have played for and managed Celtic in victories over our great rivals has been an honour and a privilege for a fan like myself. It has also been an experience, to say the least. I think I can safely say I have received more abuse from Rangers fans than any other Celtic man in recent history, and I take that as a kind of compliment, because it means that I have done my job well – to win for Celtic is all that I want to do.

I wish that there had not been the unsavoury elements associated with the Old Firm, and I believe the sectarian situation is getting better as both clubs do what they can to tackle the issue. This book addresses those problems, but thankfully *Hail! Hail!* is much, much more about the football, about the Old Firm matches themselves.

Martin Hannan, who helped me with my memoirs *Neil Lennon: Man and Bhoys*, has chosen 20 classic Old Firm clashes as seen from a Celtic viewpoint. All the great victories are there, including my own favourite when we won 1-0 in 2004 to complete a five-timer in a single season.

Some of the 20 will surprise readers, but Martin explains why all the games he has chosen were important in their time. He has also gained fresh reflections from some great Celtic players, and I have been happy to make my contribution.

Hail! Hail! is a fine addition to the growing Celtic library. I am happy to recommend it to you.

Neil Lennon
Celtic Park, July 2010

INTRODUCTION

It may no longer be the biggest derby in world football in terms of attendances – a record it held for decades – but, for anyone with a genuine sense of footballing history, the Old Firm derby remains the greatest battle between local rivals anywhere on the planet.

It's a true derby, as it features two teams from the same city. Other great rivalries like Barcelona v. Real Madrid and Liverpool v. Manchester United are not derbies as such, as clubs from two separate cities are involved.

You may argue that the Old Firm derby is not even the only rivals match in Glasgow, as Partick Thistle fans would tell you any time they play Celtic or Rangers, but the Old Firm match has long been the most famous derby in Scotland and has fair claim to be the best-known derby in world football.

Let's list some of the most famous 'true' city derbies. England: Liverpool v. Everton, Manchester United v. Manchester City, Arsenal v. Spurs; Italy: Inter Milan v. AC Milan, Roma v. Lazio, Juventus v. Torino; Portugal: Benfica v. Sporting Lisbon; Czech Republic: Sparta Prague v. Slavia Prague; Spain: Real Madrid v. Atlético Madrid, Barcelona v. Espanyol; Greece: the triangular series between AEK Athens, Panathinaikos and Olympiacos in the Greek capital; Hungary: Ferencváros v. Újpest in Budapest; Romania: Dinamo Bucharest v. Steaua Bucharest; Bulgaria: CSKA Sofia v. Levski Sofia; Russia: CSKA Moscow v. Spartak Moscow; Turkey: the triangular series between Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray in Istanbul; Argentina: Boca Juniors v. River

Plate in Buenos Aires; Brazil: Botafogo v. Fluminense in Rio de Janeiro, Corinthians v. Palmeiras in São Paulo; Egypt: Al-Ahly v. Zamalek; and in Casablanca, in Morocco, the derby that many experts rate as the fiercest anywhere, with two sets of utterly fanatical followers, Raja v. Wydad. It's an impressive list, and there are many other great rivalries in world football, but the Old Firm derby beats them all because it is unique in several respects, not all of them pleasant.

The Old Firm series has the longest history of any derby, and, crucially, it is an unbroken one, as both clubs have always competed in the top division of the Scottish Football League. Counting friendlies in the early years and minor tournaments such as the long-defunct Glasgow Charity Cup, they have played each other nearly 600 times, a record for any senior derby. Rangers have the most wins, and about a quarter of the matches have been draws.

The Old Firm match is also almost invariably the battle to be the top team not just in Glasgow but in Scotland as a whole. In no other derby can it be said that the winners are usually guaranteed to be en route to a trophy. For between them the Old Firm have dominated Scottish football, with 95 league championships, 67 Scottish Cups and 40 Scottish League Cups between them.

The teams' supremacy in league football in particular is astonishing. Since the foundation of the Scottish League in 1890, the longest period without Celtic or Rangers as champions has been just three seasons, namely 1982-83 to 1984-85, when Dundee United and Aberdeen (twice) won the Premier Division. Contrast that with the long periods of Old Firm dominance, such as the record nine-in-a-row titles won by Celtic from 1965-66 to 1973-74 and Rangers from 1988-89 to 1996-97. From the year 1904 to 1947, albeit with the competition suspended during the Second World War, only one other team won the league: Motherwell in 1931-32.

It's because they have been consistently the two best teams in Scotland that Celtic and Rangers make a derby that is passionate, intense and thoroughly engrossing, but there are other, non-footballing, reasons why the Old Firm derby is renowned. The aim of this book is specifically not to rake over old embers of a history littered with unpleasantness. Sectarianism was and is a blot on the face of Scotland, and only an idiot would deny that, for a century or more, the Old Firm has been an excuse for bigotry and all the dreadfulness associated with it, although it is true that both clubs have profited from that religious enmity.

Thankfully, the efforts of both clubs and the authorities to tackle the bigots have begun to pay off in recent years. Sectarianism has not been eradicated, however, and in certain parts of Scotland and Northern Ireland it is still not safe to walk particular streets wearing the colours of Celtic or Rangers. There may come a day when all Celtic and Rangers fans will happily mingle in downtown bars after an Old Firm match and swap cheery anecdotes, but it is so far in the future you would need Doctor Who's Tardis to find it.

This book will mention controversies such as sectarian issues when appropriate, and indeed one chapter will be devoted to the match that changed Scots law and really began the long process of tackling bigotry: the Scottish Cup final of 1980. Be assured, however, that this book will be first and foremost about football, about the greatest Old Firm matches as seen from a Celtic FC point of view. (Neutrals should be aware that Mainstream, the publishers of this book, are bringing out a companion volume, *Follow, Follow*, written by Iain Duff, which will tackle the subject from an Ibrox viewpoint. Buying both would be doubly instructive, and, for the record, neither Iain nor I has a clue at the time of writing as to which games the other is choosing.)

I have taken 'classic clashes' to mean the most significant and important matches. It would have been very easy to

start with the 7-1 victory by Celtic in the 1957 Scottish League Cup final – unsurprisingly, it is one of the longest chapters in this book – and work down the scorelines, such as 6-2, 5-1, 4-0 etc., to arrive at the twenty best performances by Celtic in terms of goals, but low-scoring matches have been just as vital and important; there are even four draws in the selection of twenty, one included because of matters both on and off the field – fans will guess that means the so-called ‘Battle of Ibrox’ in 1987.

It was, therefore, no easy task to choose the twenty most significant Old Firm matches from a Celtic point of view. In my opinion, only five were automatic choices, and every Celtic fan would surely agree that the matches of 1888, 1905, 1957, 1979 and 2000 would be in anyone’s top ten of Old Firm games as seen from a Parkhead standpoint.

It could be argued that the Ibrox Disaster of 1971 was very significant for the Old Firm. Indeed, it was massively traumatic for Scottish society as a whole. But I did not feel it was right to include the match, as I know there are some families of the victims and other people connected with both clubs for whom the memories are still too raw after nearly 40 years. To feature that game and those utterly tragic events in what is largely a celebration of Celtic’s achievements would be inappropriate, but it is correct to acknowledge the disaster as by far the worst event associated with the Old Firm. This book is being published in 2010, and I can only hope that, when the 40th anniversary of the disaster occurs on 2 January 2011, the people of Scotland and Old Firm fans everywhere across the world will take the opportunity to remember the dead and act accordingly.

The more you know the history, the more you realise that certain Old Firm matches came to define an era, such as the 6-2 victory that kick-started Martin O’Neill’s reign at Celtic Park. Others were just completely odd occasions, victories attained against all current form, and that is why they are so

memorable. There is a mixture of both categories in this book. In each chapter, I will give the background to the match and convey a flavour of the wider events of the time, the better to put the matches in context. Since most readers will be well aware of recent history, it follows that the chapters dealing with earlier Old Firm matches are rather more explanatory. It stands to reason that, with four league games per season and both clubs much more dominant than in the first seven decades of Celtic's history, there are now many more Old Firm matches, certainly than before the 1960s, which is why the majority of chapters are from the Stein era on.

Earlier chapters must rely on accounts such as newspaper reports, since Old Father Time has long ago robbed us of live witnesses to the events detailed here. In naming teams, I have also used the style and formation of the time, so that 2-3-5 is used right up until the 1970s.

I gratefully acknowledge the work of historians and authors Willie Maley, Brian Wilson, David Docherty, David Potter, Pat Woods, my *Scotland on Sunday* colleague Andrew Smith and the people behind the marvellous website www.kerrydalestreet.com, whose efforts to build a comprehensive Internet history of Celtic should be applauded and supported.

I would particularly like to thank all the great Celtic players who gave freely of their time to talk to me. As they would not take a fee, I will be donating 20 per cent of any royalties received to The Celtic Foundation. So, dear reader, tell your friends to buy this book, as it's for a good cause!

My thanks go to Bill Campbell, Pete MacKenzie, Graeme Blaikie, Alex Hepworth and all at Mainstream Publishing; my agent, Mark Stanton, whose idea this book was; football agent Martin Reilly; my colleagues at *Scotland on Sunday*; my research assistant Shaun Miller; photographer Frances Anderson; the picture archive and library staff of the Daily Record and Sunday Mail Ltd and The Scotsman Publications

Ltd; and a special mention to the staff at Dumbarton and Edinburgh Central libraries and especially the Mitchell Library in Glasgow.

My special thanks go to Neil Lennon, a wonderfully intelligent and courageous man whom I am proud to call a friend.

My greatest debt of gratitude goes to my wife and children for putting up with me in writing mode and to my mother for the use of the office and her unflinching support these last 51 years.

Thank you most of all to Celtic Football Club for nearly five decades of a roller-coaster relationship between us that has never been anything less than passionate. Long may it continue.

*Martin Hannan
The Westbury Hotel, Dublin, April 2010*

1

A VERY GOOD START

28 MAY 1888
FRIENDLY FIXTURE
CELTIC 5, RANGERS 2

Looking back over more than 120 years of Celtic's history, it seems highly appropriate that the club's first-ever match was played against Rangers. For good or ill, the fates of the two clubs have been interlinked ever since. It is simply unimaginable to think of Scottish football without the Old Firm, and while there have been all manner of problems associated with the matches down the decades, there has also been a genuine sporting rivalry between the two great clubs.

At the heart of the Old Firm story is the world's most popular team game, Association Football. Ged O'Brien, former curator of the Scottish Football Museum and a Celtic fan, maintains that Scotland invented modern football, as the passing game originated here in the 1880s and was exported around the world by Scottish players and coaches. It's a convincing theory when you read how the English teams at the time emphasised individual play.

As the sport exploded onto the world scene in the late Victorian era, Celtic and Rangers were already pre-eminent

in a country that really was pioneering football. Their encounters down the years have involved some of the most memorable matches ever played in Scotland. Not for one moment, however, can it be stated that every Old Firm match was an exemplar of the highest qualities of football. It's because they have been so competitive and too often played by tense men fearing defeat that many Old Firm matches have been deficient in skill – yet not one has ever been anything less than exciting, especially for the fans of both sides.

The 1880s was a time of change in Scotland, and the Scottish nation as a whole was getting massively into sport. Football in particular was slowly but surely becoming a national obsession. The expansion of railways, plus industries conceding time off to their employees, meant the ordinary worker, if not himself playing, could spectate at the increasing number of matches.

Glasgow was booming as the powerhouse and Second City of the Empire, providing ships, engines and locomotives for the world. Mines and steelworks across the Central Belt provided the raw materials for this concentration of heavy industry, while there was great demand for labourers on farms and in road and railway construction. Irish immigrants were numerous in the labouring and unemployed classes, as many other jobs and the professions were closed to them. It was from these immigrants and their families that Celtic drew their initial support, creating a bond that has been handed down from generation to generation.

In 1883 the Boys' Brigade had been founded in the city by William Alexander Smith to encourage healthy activities and already numbered membership in the thousands, most from a Church of Scotland background. Many Catholic priests and monks also sought to engage their boys and girls in similar healthy pursuits, and, as we shall see, two of Scotland's top clubs of today owe their existence to the clergy.

There was, however, no religious connotation involved in the founding of Rangers. In 1872, a group of four friends who rowed together on the Clyde, Peter Campbell, William McBeath and brothers Moses and Peter McNeil, decided to put together a football team after seeing matches played at Glasgow Green. They called themselves Rangers, having seen the name in an English rugby book. Peter McNeil, whose family hailed from Rhu in what is now Argyll and Bute, was probably the driving force, as he owned a sports equipment shop. His brother, Moses, was just 17 at the time. They played only a couple of matches that year, but in 1873 the quartet decided to formally establish Rangers FC, though they were too late to join the Scottish Football Association (SFA), founded earlier that year. They were not very successful as a team at first, but Moses McNeil was selected to play for Scotland in 1876 and thus became Rangers' first internationalist.

By 1888, Rangers were well established as one of the bigger clubs in Scotland. They had reached two Scottish Cup finals, losing both to Vale of Leven, and in 1887 they competed in the English FA Cup – a not unusual occurrence at the time – and reached the semi-final. The rumoured arrival of a new club in Glasgow, in the shape of Celtic, was not seen by Rangers as any sort of threat. Indeed, Rangers actively sought to help the new club by agreeing to be their first formal opposition.

At the outset, the relationship between Rangers and Celtic was very friendly, a situation that lasted for a good few years, as Celtic were to find sterner competition at first from nearer neighbours in the east end of Glasgow. Rangers' diligent historian David Mason has in his possession a newspaper cutting from that era that talks of Celtic playing a friendly against Rangers as preparation for a match against their great rivals, Clyde FC. Along with Queen's Park and Third Lanark on the south side, Clyde had been among the main competitors for Rangers in Glasgow for some years

before 1888 and remained so for several years after Celtic started playing.

Clyde were well placed to snap up footballing talent on the east side of the city, but the private nature of the club and its involvement in other sports left the way open for another club to come into the area, concentrating on football. The history of the founding of Celtic has been told many times, but it is worth recounting the earliest days, as they form the backdrop to the first match. It also needs to be explained why a club that was formally constituted in 1887 has always held 1888 to be its year of foundation. Simple answer really: that is when Celtic first played football, and in 1936 the club's directors decided once and for all that the 'foundation' date was 1888.

On the initiative of Brother Walfrid of the Marist order, born Andrew Kerins in County Sligo in Ireland, The Celtic Football Club was formally established in November 1887 by a group of Scottish-Irish businessmen meeting in St Mary's Church hall, Glasgow. The club would play principally to raise money for The Poor Children's Dinner Table, a sort of soup kitchen that provided food mainly for the children of Irish immigrants, who found it tough to get work in those days when anti-Catholic feelings were openly voiced across central Scotland. The Great Famine, which had caused the largest wave of emigration from Ireland some 40 years previously, was still burned into the memory of the Irish Catholics of Scotland, and putting food on the tables of the poor was the biggest concern of their clergy and leading figures.

Led by Glasgow-born builder John Glass and a tailor called Pat Welsh - more about them in the next chapter - the founders took their inspiration from Edinburgh Hibernians, founded by Canon Edward Hannan, a cousin of the author's direct ancestors. That club had originated out of St Patrick's Church in the Cowgate in 1875 and was an exclusively Catholic young men's club. Hibernians had overcome

sectarian opposition to join the SFA and won the Scottish Cup in 1887, the first club from the east coast to do so. They were given a hero's welcome by the Irish community in Glasgow for their achievement. One member of Hibernians is supposed to have said, 'Why not start a similar club here?' And that's what happened.

Despite the changing scene in football, the Hibernians remained resolutely Catholic and amateur. However, while Irish Catholicism underpinned the Edinburgh club's founding, Celtic of Glasgow – note, the club's name has never formally been Glasgow Celtic – had no bar on any other religion from the start, even though the club's first patrons were the Catholic archbishop of Glasgow, Charles Eyre, and local clergy. His Grace even contributed £1 to the coffers, as did other clerics.

As with other sports at that time, football was supposedly amateur. The Celtic players were also amateurs at first, but the majority of the committee was prepared to go along with the 'shamateurism' practices of the day and pay 'gifts' and 'expenses' that were nearly as notional, and perhaps nearly as valuable, as those of some Westminster MPs of recent times. Having seen developments in England, John Glass was happy with the idea of a football club where players were professional in the sense that they would be provided with jobs and 'rewards' or 'expenses' in compensation for playing for Celtic. But full professionalism would come; Glass was sure of that.

Glass's argument was that better players would make for better entertainment, bigger crowds and thus more money to feed the poor. The contention that Glass and his associates later saw the possibility of gaining rewards for themselves from a professional club is unanswerable, but at first their motives were mostly selfless.

The name of Celtic was suggested by Brother Walfrid himself to emphasise the links between Scotland and Ireland. At that time, Hibernians linked up with other 'Irish'

clubs, such as Dundee Harp, and played many fundraising friendlies to aid charities and the other Catholic teams. One of these was the first-ever match played under Celtic's auspices, on a pitch created by the club members and hundreds of volunteers at a site in Parkhead about 100 metres east from where Celtic Park now stands. The original pitch was on vacant land adjacent to the Eastern Necropolis, the cemetery for the area, at the corner of Janefield and Dalmarnock Streets, the latter now known as Springfield Road. The six acres or so were leased for £50 per year, and it's possible that the ground's nickname of 'Paradise' was gained from the fact that it was next door to the cemetery.

The opening match at Old Celtic Park on 8 May 1888 was between Hibernians and Cowairs and ended 0-0. The gate receipts were put towards funds for the new club, and on 28 May 1888 Celtic FC were able to play their first-ever match. Their opponents would be a Rangers XI, that club being caught up in the missionary fervour to spread the word that Association Football was the best sport around.

Probably caused by the confusing existence of the previous match at Old Celtic Park, it is a myth encouraged to this day in Edinburgh and elsewhere that the first players for the new Glasgow club were all from Hibernians. That is just not true. Only one player in the original Celtic XI, Michael Dunbar, was listed as then playing for Edinburgh Hibernians. The other ten came from west-coast clubs with Irish followings or connections, such as Carfin Shamrock and Govan Whitefield. Yes, as many as seven of the team had played for Hibernians in the past, but that was a time when players frequently changed clubs, even during the season, as did many other Catholic footballers in Scotland.

It remains a curiosity of the club's history that the very first Celtic team did not have any players who had actually 'signed' to Celtic, such considerations as registrations and contracts being ahead of them at that time. The most important recruit to the immediate cause was the man rated

as the outstanding Scottish footballer of the era, James Kelly of Renton. A Scot of Irish parentage, Kelly came from an area that could arguably be called the cradle of true Scottish football. In what is now West Dunbartonshire, between Loch Lomond and the River Clyde, there were three teams, all founded in 1873. With their revolutionary passing game and quasi-professional approach to playing football – they had organised training sessions, which caused much mirth at other clubs until they started winning everything – Renton, Vale of Leven and Dumbarton would dominate the early years of organised Scottish football along with Queen's Park.

It was a local approach that reached its peak in 1885, when Renton played Vale of Leven in the Scottish Cup final at Hampden, the former club winning 3-1. The commitment to individual and team improvement had rubbed off on James Kelly, who was the stalwart of the Renton side that in 1888 pulled off a remarkable Double. They won the Scottish Cup by beating Cambuslang 6-1 in the final in February, then played English FA Cup winners West Bromwich Albion in a challenge match for the 'World Championship' – well, only England and Scotland played serious football at that time. Renton won 4-1 in the match played at Cathkin – known as Small Hampden – in Glasgow, and thus the village club became football's first world champions.

Dunbartonshire's supremacy wilted as footballing resources gravitated to the cities and bigger towns. James Kelly was a case in point. Luring Kelly to Parkhead and making him the fulcrum of the new team was John Glass's main aim in 1888, and he succeeded by practising a fine disregard for the rules on amateurism, Kelly being paid considerable sums in a roundabout fashion. Kelly played a crucial part in that first Celtic match, not least because he brought his Renton colleague Neil McCallum with him, but his transition from Dunbartonshire to Glasgow was not made official until later.

Another target for Glass was Tom Maley, a teacher who had played for Third Lanark and Hibernians and was a noted inside-forward. With Brother Walfrid, Glass and Pat Welsh set out to recruit Tom at his family's home in Cathcart, which was well known to Welsh, who was friends with Tom's father. Good looking and dashing, with an eye for the ladies, 'Handsome Tom' was out, but Willie, his younger brother, was in, and he was also on Glass's list. We'll learn more about him in subsequent chapters because that young man was to become the dominant, and often dictatorial, figure in the first 50 years and more of Celtic's existence. The Maleys agreed to play, and the game against Rangers was on.

That first historic Celtic team consisted of Michael Dolan of Drumpellier in goal; Eddie Pearson of Carfin Shamrock and James McLaughlin of Govan Whitefield at full-back; Willie Maley of Cathcart, James Kelly of Renton and Philip Murray of Cambuslang Hibernian; Neil McCallum of Renton, Tom Maley of Cathcart, John Madden of Dumbarton, Michael Dunbar of Hibernians and Harry Gorevin of Govan Whitefield. It was a scratch team, composed entirely of guest players, and history does not record if they ever played or trained together before the match.

It should be noted that Rangers were represented by their 'Swifts', a sort of young reserve side. Their line-up of Nicol; McIntyre and McPherson; Muir, McFarlane and Meikle; Soutar, McKenzie, McLaren, Robb and Wilson contained several members of their regular first-team squad but was by no means the strongest side they could put out. Any Rangers fan reading this may well be comforted by the fact that Celtic did not beat their best team, but Celtic fans will no doubt think, 'Typical, they always underestimated us.'

Plenty of historians have unearthed the facts of that first match from the various journals that covered football at the time. A crowd reportedly in excess of 2,000 gathered around the pitch that late spring evening to watch the action, bringing in gate receipts that gladdened Brother Walfrid's

heart: his charitable concept was going to succeed. Celtic took the field in white shirts with green collars and a red Celtic cross on the breast, black shorts and black-and-green hooped socks. The strips had been donated by Penman's, a drapery in Bridgeton. Rangers wore their light-blue shirts, having rejected their own 'hoops' some time previously.

The first man to score a goal in any shade of Celtic shirt was Neil McCallum, the right-winger from Renton whom James Kelly had brought with him. Just a few minutes into the match, he gained his place in Celtic's history thanks to an error by Meikle, who conceded a corner. The kick was taken by Michael Dunbar – the first 'assist' in Celtic's history – and McCallum headed home from directly in front of goal.

The crowd cheered politely but were stilled after ten minutes when Rangers equalised through Soutar. With wind advantage, Celtic continued to press, and goalkeeper Nicol, the Andy Goram of his day, defied the Celts with a series of saves. From a free kick late in the first half, James Kelly's header was put behind for a corner, and the Rentonian then gleefully rose to head home the corner kick and notch Celtic's second.

Leading 2-1 at half-time, Celtic turned to play into the wind, and it was presumed that Rangers' greater experience would tell in the second half, which they began in energetic fashion. Celtic's defence held out, however, and Tom Maley put the new team further ahead, only for Soutar to clinch a second for Rangers.

With the match nicely poised, Tom Maley grabbed the fourth goal, and, assisted by the tricky McCallum, Handsome Tom then earned his hat-trick by scoring Celtic's fifth. McCallum had a goal chopped off for offside, or the result might well have been 6-2, a scoreline that was eventually achieved against Rangers in the next millennium.

Rangers did not give up and were threatening the Celtic goal when the final whistle was blown. Celtic's first match was completed, and the team that would become their

greatest rivals had been comfortably beaten 5-2. The bitterness of the rivalry lay in the future, however, and on that evening the players of both teams went off with the Celtic committee, who hosted them for a most convivial evening of eating, drinking and entertainment.

Over the following ten months, Celtic would play their first full season, including competitive matches. The basis of that first Celtic squad comprised Kelly and McCallum, the two Maleys and players imported en masse from Hibernians. Just as it is false to say the first Celtic team was made up of men from Hibernians, so it would be equally false to say that Celtic's first competitive season was accomplished without their imports from the east, all of whom had been induced to join Celtic by Messrs Glass and Welsh. The new club was ambitious, and the 'rewards' it offered were not unattractive to Hibernians' young men, many of whom were originally from the west coast in any case. James Kelly and 1890s hero Dan Doyle were both 'gifted' public houses by admirers. Nice 'presents' if you can get them.

With their strict amateurism, their bar on non-Catholics and denuded of their best players by Celtic's raids, Hibernians swiftly crumbled, and the death from pneumonia of Canon Hannan in May 1891 effectively ended the club. Some months later, thanks to Catholic leaders in Leith, a new club was born and based at Easter Road, where they played their first match in February 1893. Hibernian FC was, from the start, an open club with no religious bars, which did the Leith club a huge favour. The two clubs founded by Catholic clerics have long been friendly rivals and, perhaps more importantly, have both always tried to play attacking football, leading to some classic encounters over the years.

Of that first Celtic team, James Kelly, the Maley Brothers and Michael Dunbar would all have long connections with the club. Goalkeeper Michael Dolan stayed on but spent most of his six years in the reserves. Neil McCallum was a vital player for a few years before going south as a

professional to Nottingham Forest and then returning to play for Rangers, the first man to play for both Old Firm clubs and the first Catholic to play for Rangers. It perhaps says something about the respect in which he was held in his native Vale of Leven that, when he died in 1920, he was given a grave in Bonhill Church of Scotland's kirkyard with a funeral service conducted by a local Catholic priest.

Eddie Pearson returned immediately to Carfin, and Phil Murray and Harry Gorevin played a few more games but did not survive the influx of Hibernians. John Madden did not score in that first match, but he made up for it with plenty of goals in a fine career at Celtic, though he briefly returned to his native Dumbarton to play for the local side. By late 1889, he was Celtic's leading forward, and in total, in nine years off and on with Celtic, he scored forty-nine goals in one hundred and eighteen appearances. He also played twice for Scotland, both matches being against Wales, and in the second of those, an 8-0 drubbing of the principality, he scored four. His nickname was 'the Rooter' because his shot was so strong it threatened to knock the posts out by the roots. After a spell with Dundee United he moved to Prague to coach Slavia, where he enjoyed such success that he is revered as one of the fathers of Czech football and there is a statue to him in the city.

The first Celtic team will never be forgotten, not least because they won the first Old Firm match. It heralded a bright new dawn for a club whose name would soon be heard around the world of football. Celtic had arrived, and a great history had begun to be written.

THE FIRST OLD FIRM CUP FINAL WIN

22 APRIL 1899
SCOTTISH CUP FINAL
CELTIC 2, RANGERS 0

In the years that followed Celtic's first Old Firm victory, the club expanded fast and enjoyed immediate success with huge crowds at their matches – in some seasons they had the largest average attendance, beating even Queen's Park. They were soon admitted to the SFA, as the other clubs needed the cash from Celtic's following, a situation that continues to this day.

Newspaper reports of the era frequently referred to the team as 'the Irishmen', which was inaccurate, as only a few Celtic players at that time had been born in Ireland. As early as 1893, a newspaper carried an item questioning the right of 'Irish' players from Celtic to represent Scotland. The barbs were anti-Catholic as much as anti-Irish, and, led by Willie Maley, the club did everything it could to emphasise that it was a Scottish club with an Irish heritage.

From the start, people from outside the immediate area of east Glasgow began to follow the fortunes of a club that represented dignity for Catholics. Celtic acquired the permanent services of James Kelly, Neil McCallum and

several well-known players from Edinburgh Hibernians. Most vital of all, they had a team that played good football.

James Kelly was the rock, but the irrepressible Dan Doyle became the talisman. He had played for Hibernians in the 1888 match that opened Celtic Park, then made his name in England as a professional, where he was unfortunately involved in an onfield accident that led to an opponent's death. His return to 'amateur' Celtic from professional Everton in the early 1890s was a cause célèbre, but his talent as a defender was undeniable and he later captained Celtic and Scotland.

The Maley influence began to tell on the Celtic style of play – both Tom and Willie being noted athletes and champion sprinters – as they preferred fast passing movements, and with Doyle at their heart, Celtic had a solid defence. They also had an ability to turn defence into attack quickly, constantly pressurised opponents and had the determination to score by a variety of means. Pundits regularly denigrate 'the Celtic way', but it was no myth. It was how the first Celts played the game, and thankfully many since have embraced the culture.

In their first competitive season of 1888-89, Celtic entered four tournaments and reached the finals of them all, and, judging by reports in the *Scottish Umpire* journal and elsewhere, the new club had swiftly become one of the most feared, as well as one of the most entertaining, teams in Scotland.

In the Scottish Cup final that season Celtic lost to Third Lanark – but only after bad weather at the first match forced a replay. Celtic won their first trophy in their inaugural season, beating Cowliars 6-1 in the Glasgow North-Eastern Cup final at Clyde's ground, Barrowfield. The Celts also reached the finals of the Glasgow Charity Cup, losing 2-5 to Renton, and the Glasgow International Exhibition Cup, which they lost to Cowliars 0-2. Four finals with a trophy won out of four tournaments entered in their first season – no

wonder Celtic were in demand wherever they went, including England, where they played several matches.

Off the field, both within and outwith the club, there were significant developments in 1890, the most important being the start of the Scottish Football League in the summer of that year. Even before the league arrived, Celtic were making serious money: their annual income by 1890-91 was around £5,000, making them the wealthiest club in Britain, according to figures held at the Scottish Football Museum.

The better-established Scottish clubs had looked with envy at the formation of the Football League in England in 1888 – the idea of a Scot, William McGregor – the FA having legalised professionalism some years earlier. Anybody with half a brain in Scottish football – there have been many of those down the years, usually wearing blazers – knew that a league and professionalism were coming, and some looked forward to it, especially Celtic, though no one dared voice such sentiments for fear of the SFA's inquisition.

In alphabetical order, the following ten clubs joined Celtic in the original Scottish League: Abercorn, Cambuslang, Cowlares, Dumbarton, Heart of Midlothian, Rangers, Renton, St Mirren, Third Lanark and Vale of Leven. Only Celtic, Rangers, Hearts, Dumbarton and St Mirren still survive in the senior ranks, and only the first two of those have never been relegated. Hibernians were in some disarray, and their secretary 'forgot' to attend. Queen's Park would have nothing to do with it.

Season 1890-91 thus saw Celtic play their first league matches, with the very first game being against Renton, who won 4-1 at Parkhead. Later in the season, Renton committed the ultimate sin, in those amateur days, of playing against a team of 'professionals' from Edinburgh who had been expelled from the league. As a consequence, Renton were also expelled and all their results declared void, which is why some histories of Celtic do not include that original fixture. Celtic were also deducted four points

for fielding an ineligible player in that match, but it would have made no difference to their final placing, as Dumbarton and Rangers both ended on 29 points, with the Celts in third on 21. The Sons of the Rock and Rangers were declared joint champions after a 2-2 draw in a play-off, though Dumbarton had the superior goal difference and by today's standards would have been sole champions.

Celtic did win the Glasgow Cup in 1891, their first major domestic honour, but the following season they would eclipse all their achievements by winning the Scottish Cup, beating Queen's Park 5-1 in a replay after the first match was declared void owing to crowd problems. The east end of Glasgow became a scene of riotous celebrations for the next few days, as the Irish community, who have never been known to need an excuse for a party, rejoiced in the victory of their team. Less than four years after their first match, Celtic had won the Cup - could they now go on to win the new league?

Season 1892-93 saw Celtic, playing now in green and white vertical stripes, installed in a new home not far from their original pitch. The club committee had been held to ransom by the owner of the original Celtic Park, who wanted to increase the rental fee astronomically - reportedly from £50 to £450 or £500 per year. With John Glass and Pat Welsh to the fore, the club committee decided to lease another plot with a view to eventually buying their own ground and making it the best around. What we now know as Celtic Park was formerly a brickyard. A new pitch, terraces, a running track with cycling banks and a pavilion with dressing-rooms were built on the site, largely with volunteer labour, in time for the start of the 1892-93 season.

It must have been an interesting scene when that turf was laid, as it was done by the famous Irish nationalist and proto-socialist Michael Davitt, who had served time in British jails for his activities against the Crown but had renounced violence and was now a political force. Celtic committee-

man Pat Welsh was also a former republican fighter and had been shown mercy by a Catholic soldier in the British Army and been allowed to flee Ireland. That same soldier was now Welsh's good friend from Cathcart, former sergeant Thomas Maley, father of Celtic players Willie and Tom.

By bringing in Davitt, the Celtic committee made their stance on the fractious issue of Irish politics abundantly clear: they wanted no truck with violence. The likelihood is that Davitt's involvement was largely John Glass's doing. A shrewd politician, Glass was in overall charge of Celtic but had the good sense to let Willie Maley, as match secretary, run the football side of the club. In later years, Maley would declare that the club owed its existence to Glass.

By the early 1890s, Willie Maley was a trained accountant and Handsome Tom was a teacher. Both men were fitness fanatics and had loved football from the start. For Willie Maley, however, the real developing love affair was with Celtic, and he worked closely with James Kelly to take charge of onfield events and built a strong relationship with club president Glass.

In 1892-93 Celtic won their first Scottish League title, not long after Brother Walfrid departed from Glasgow to try and repeat his feats with another large Irish population, this time in London. He left knowing he had created champions for a community he had served so faithfully for 25 years.

His was not the only talent going to England. With Scottish footballers flooding south for money, the SFA finally allowed professional football in Scotland. Celtic secured their own players, captured some new ones and went on to win the league again the following year, with Hearts in second this time - though the next season it was the Edinburgh club's turn to win its first title. With a Division Two now formed, the league was firmly established, and of the senior clubs only Queen's Park stubbornly refused to join.

Celtic and then Hearts won the title in 1895-96 and 1896-97 respectively before Celtic recaptured the championship