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COLLECTING COMMON CULTURE

Football programme collecting at the National Library of Scotland

Abstract

Football features prominently in the popular culture and economy of Scotland. Since its introduction in Britain in the mid-1870s, the football programme has developed from a single sheet diagram of players and officials to a multi-page glossy magazine. Programmes have become collectible artefacts; they record the activities of clubs and associations, events, and provide useful contextual information for social and cultural study.

Keywords: ephemera, football, programmes

INTRODUCTION

This paper will deal with the topic of printed ephemera, specifically the football programme. I will provide a brief illustrated history of the artefact and argue that its value goes beyond the ephemeral. I will also argue that it is worthy of collection by our national libraries, and I will discuss some of the bibliographic aspects of collecting this material at the National Library of Scotland.

EPHEMERA

The term 'ephemera' is derived from the Greek word *ephemeron*. Literally it refers to something that lasts around a day. In the context of documentation the definition that has greatest currency is 'minor documents of everyday life', coined by Charles Rickards in his *Encyclopedia of ephemera* (2000). However, Rickards was aware of the shortcomings of the term, since not every item of ephemera can be regarded as minor, or even transient.

Printed ephemera provide us with links to the past. They provide records of social history, particularly everyday life, and with the conventions of written language, graphic design and printing. They form an integral part of any culture employing the written word.

Rickards' *Encyclopedia* lists 546 categories of ephemera from admission tickets to zoetrope discs. My focus is on one of these categories: football programmes.



Illustration 1

THE FOOTBALL PROGRAMME

Tamir Bar-On, in his book *The world through soccer* (2014) contends that football is the world’s most popular sport, a global and cultural phenomenon. The television audience for the World Cup Finals in 2010 was estimated to include almost half of the world’s population, with viewers in nearly every country. The sport impacts upon politics, religion, business and the arts. Around the globe, on a daily basis, men, women and children play in, attend, watch, film, commentate upon, or write about football matches taking place from local parks to huge stadia. Football permeates our lives, whether we like it or not.

The football programme, with its direct correspondence to the actual matches upon which the rest of the panoply is supported, provides immediate intrinsic value at the event, then assumes the role of chronicle, and collectible.

The first football programmes appeared in Britain in the mid-1870s. Early examples were derived from cricket scorecards and consisted of a diagrammatic line-up of players and presiding officials, exemplified in an 1895 match card from Hampden Park, Glasgow (Illustration 2). These cards were printed black on white, carried details of venue, date and kick-off time, and occasionally some advertising. They were generally issued by the organisers of the match, usually the host club, though some were published by, and distributed through, local newspapers.



Illustration 2

By the 1900s the typical programme had developed into a double-sided paper leaflet. The single sheet soon became a four-page folder and the larger format provided for additional information and advertising space, defraying the costs of production and even making a small profit for the club. Litster writes in *The football programme* (2000) that: "Printers and publishers quickly cottoned on to the example shown by other branches of entertainment, chiefly the theatre, and attracted paid advertising to the issue. That, in turn required sufficient sales to keep advertisers happy, which meant the content had to be good enough to attract buyers at the match". A match programme from the Perth club St. Johnstone (Illustration 3) demonstrates local trader advertising, as well as periodical numbering.



Illustration 3

Generally page one served as a 'cover', the centre-spread carried the diagram of the pitch and players with some editorial comment, and the back page contained advertising.

For some clubs, sales became quite profitable, and by the 1920s most senior clubs and associations, certainly in England, were issuing programmes. It was during this period that programmes began to display many of the stock features that would distinguish the format to the present day: multi-page, stapled, with content that included an editorial from a club official, a section on the opposition, a review of the previous match, a list of the season's fixtures, and a key to help spectators

interpret the results of other matches being played and often displayed on a scoreboard in the stadium at half-time.

The four-page format remained popular through the 1920s and 1930s, and use of two-colour printing increased. For major matches during the period, a new approach was adopted: this was an eight, twelve, or sixteen-page pamphlet, often with an enhanced colour cover. Such pamphlets provided a substantial record of the event and were obviously designed as souvenirs. The programme produced for the 1924 England v Scotland match at the year-old Wembley Stadium, played 12 days before the opening of the British Empire exhibition illustrates the point (Illustration 4). This programme was reprinted for the 1981 meeting of the countries.

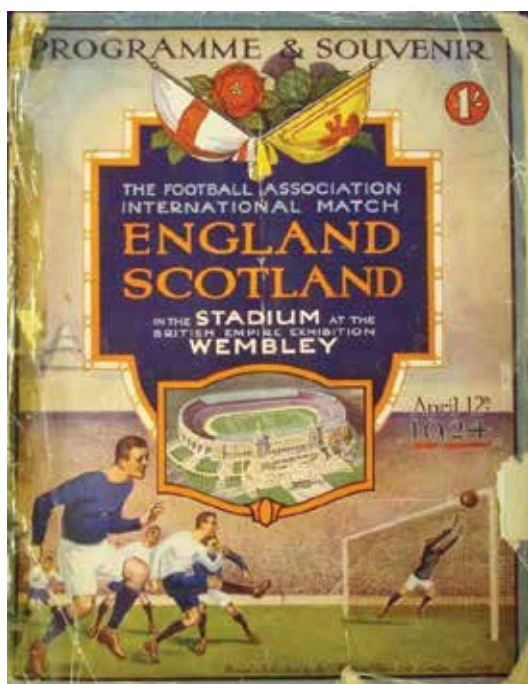


Illustration 4

However, during the Second World War and its immediate aftermath, due largely to paper rationing, programme development was somewhat stilted and where they were produced at all, often reverted to simple folded sheets.

For the majority of the 1950s club programmes changed little, and rarely reached the standard of the pre-War publications, though there were some exceptions, notably from the Edinburgh clubs Hibernian and Heart of Midlothian, the former producing a large format programme (Illustration 5).



Illustration 5

In the 1960s the English Football League produced its own magazine, which was regularly incorporated into club programmes, bolstering many of the four- or eight-page publications of lower league clubs. However, it is the 1970s that are judged by many as the golden age of programme production, and several books, particularly Stanley and Kelly's *Football programmes* (2006) testify to this. Since the 1970s, the programme has developed into a sophisticated communications and marketing vehicle sold in large numbers and driven as much by advertising and marketing as football trends.

FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES AS SOCIAL HISTORY

Stanley and Kelly quote D.J. Taylor: "Any social historian worth his salt who wanted to discover what English life was like in say, the period 1966-79, the crucial World-Cup-to-Thatcher span, could do worse than assemble a couple of hundred football programmes". (p.16) The sentiment is not limited to England. Like the sport in which it is rooted, the football programme extends beyond the event it marks, and provides a window into the society of its time, its changing audience and changing attitudes.

So, during wartime, we find a 1944 England v Scotland match programme appealing to spectators: “If you do not wish to retain this programme, or the part of your ticket you retain after entering the Stadium, please place them in any one of the many receptacles provided for clean waste paper as you leave the ground” (quoted in Litster, p.76).

In more recent times social austerity has been reflected in some Scottish clubs’ programmes through invitations to supporters to contribute to local food banks. Clubs have traditionally retained strong, some might say tribal, local identities, and this is also reflected in match programmes. Heart of Midlothian’s programmes in the 1960s for example regularly featured local landmarks, such as this view of Edinburgh’s Scott Monument (Illustration 6).

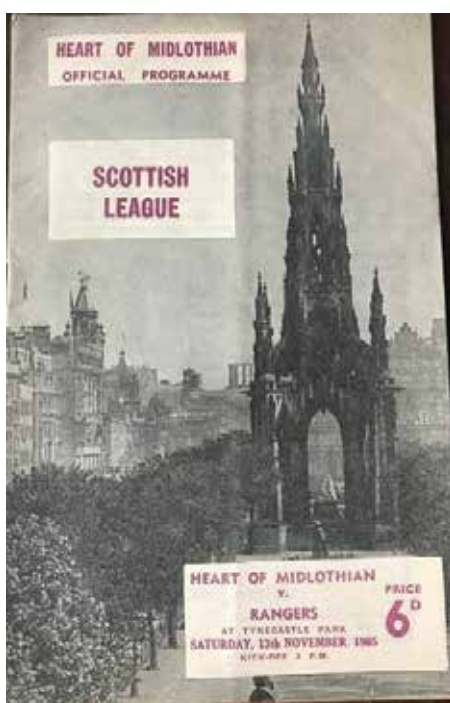


Illustration 6

Changing audiences can be discerned from match images within programmes, as well as from editorial content. Contemporary programmes have content targeted to a wider demographic than the working class male that typified older publications. Contrast an Aberdeen programme from the 1980s featuring a young woman wearing a football kit and stockings combination draped across the Aberdeen players (Illustration 7) with contemporary programmes where women are more likely to be portrayed as competitors along with a match report.



Illustration 7

Advertising provides a useful barometer of social trends and local culture and has been a feature of programmes from the earliest examples, where rudimentary promotion of beer, cigarettes, and local trades could be found in discrete sections of the programme. Listings of theatre productions in the 1950s gave way to cinema times in the 1960s, and today many of the small trader advertisements have been replaced by large company advertising and corporate sponsorship marketing which sometimes goes to great lengths to identify with the club, through branding 'official products and services', or employing strap lines with tenuous associations to the game.

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Design of programmes has changed over the years, reflecting contemporary styles. Programmes up to the 1960s tended to favour cover designs that would span several seasons, often featuring stadium views, artists' impressions of grounds or footballers, club crests or an action photograph. Modern programmes change cover style and sometimes title with each season.

Contents also changed reflecting changes in the laws of the game. In Victorian times players were identified on the match cards by distinguishing features such as colour of cap or stockings. When numbered shirts were introduced, teams were often displayed in formation on a pitch diagram, or listed by number, often with spaces for spectators to add their own notes on results, goal scorers or personnel changes, as evidenced from this Hibernian programme from January 1973 (Illustration 8). The contemporary trend is to list the full complement of playing staff with squad numbers.

£3675 IN THE NEWS
FIND the BALL THIS WEEK

HEARTS TEAMS HIBERNIAN

1. KEN GARLAND 1. JIM HERRIOT
 2. IAN SHEDDEN Dave Clarke 2. JOHN BROWNIE
 3. DAVE CLARKE Jim Jeffries 3. ERIC SCHAEFER
 4. EDDIE THOMSON 4. PAT STANTON
 5. ALAN ANDERSON 5. JIM BLACK
 6. JIM BROWN 6. JOHN BLACKLEY
 7. DONALD PARK 7. ALEX EDWARDS
 8. BILLY BENNETT Jim Edmond 8. JIM O'KOURKE
 9. DONALD FORD 9. ALAN GORDON
 10. ERIC CARRUTHERS 10. ALEX CROPLEY
 11. TOMMY MURRAY 11. ARTHUR DUNCAN
 12th Man - ANDY LYBCH 12th Man - JOHN HAMILTON
 (For 15 mins)

KICK-OFF 3 P.M.

Scorers: Hearts 3 (9/36) 3 (10/16) Hibernian 2 (11/26) 2 (10/35)

Half-Time Full-Time
 0-5 0-7

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 Less than Wholesale
 Canned Export from 95p
 Canned Pale Ale from 85p
 Whisky from £2.50
FAIRBAIRN
 11 ALBERT STREET
 Open till 10 p.m. every Wednesday

SCORE EVERY WEEK AT
GAYFIELD CARS
 246 GAYFIELD SQUARE, EDINBURGH Telephone: 654-356 8815
 273 PORTOBELLO HIGH ST., EDINBURGH Telephone: 462-488 3824
USED CAR SPECIALISTS
 TERMS - INSURANCE - EXCHANGE

STOP
 Ronnie Simpson's Sports Shop
 Just the best in Sporting Equipment
 106 ROSE STREET, WEST END
 Telephone 225 3857

Illustration 8

The size of the programme has also varied across the years. The most popular size remains A5, but many cup finals, international matches or special fixtures often employed larger formats. Several clubs flirted with pocket-sized issues in the 1960s, though despite the greater portability, these did not prove universally popular. The general format remains the stapled sheet, though there are examples of multi-folded single sheets providing an eight-page publication, or a poster. Some of the contemporary programmes running to 60 pages or more are perfect-bound.

Colour gradually replaced black on white printing. Initially this was limited to programme covers, and often with the addition of a single colour, usually that of the team, such as this example in blue from Glasgow Rangers in 1966. The eagle-eyed will also note the lack of female spectators in the artist's impression (Illustration 9).

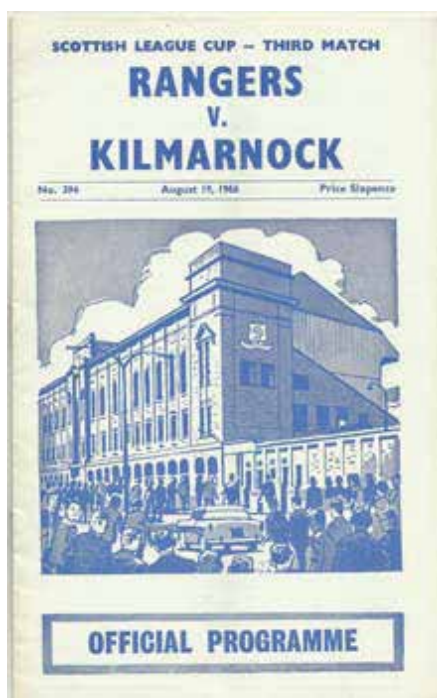


Illustration 9

Football programmes also provide excellent examples of changes in printing technology over the past 150 years: the move from letterpress to litho, and then to digital. For many years clubs enjoyed an almost symbiotic relationship with local printers. Print-runs varied according to the size of the club, but a team with 15,000-16,000 core supporters usually printed around 6,500 programmes per match – depending on the opposition or if it was a cup match. With regular league matches each season, additional cup, friendly, and perhaps European games as well as auxiliary products such as tickets, and marketing material, up to the 1990s there was sufficient printed material generated by the clubs to keep a local printer busy throughout the year.

Shaw in his book *Collecting football programmes* (1980) cites the 1966 World Cup in England as a turning point for football programme production. The commercial explosion that accompanied the tournament with its 'World Cup Willie' merchandise stimulated many clubs into realising the potential value of the programme as a marketing device as well as a source of additional revenue. This Glasgow Celtic programme (Illustration 10) from 1985 illustrates the use of design. As Hammond and Silke write in *Fully programmed* (2015): "Incredible how this deceptively simple iconic concept was never envisioned before, and unfathomable why it hasn't been reused to death ever since" (p.151).



Illustration 10

For some clubs relationships with local printers ended. In several cases companies paid clubs upfront to produce their programmes and take profits for themselves. In addition, the larger, glossier product led to longer lead times, shorter copy dates, and less topicality. However, it does not appear that the printed artefact has yet been threatened by the digital product.

COLLECTING FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES

Football programme collecting probably became a recognised hobby in the 1960s, when it assumed some of the clothing of philately, and developed a hobbyists' infrastructure. Programme traders advertised in popular football magazines. Generally, collectors would be requested to send a stamped self-addressed envelope to the trader, and would receive a typewritten list of available programmes. Later, football memorabilia shops, some dedicated to programmes, appeared. Today there are web sites with extensive sale lists accompanied by illustrations.

Christies, the auctioneers, established an annual sale of football memorabilia in Glasgow in 1989, which included programmes, but there are now regular auctions and fairs across the U.K., with significant prices paid for rare items. The programme card for the 1882 F.A. Cup Final was sold for £32,500 in 2013. The

souvenir programme for the Red Star Belgrade v Manchester United match prior to the 1958 Munich Air Disaster was sold for £1,500 in 2015. Ironically, unofficial souvenirs, particularly 'pirate' programmes often exceed the prices of the official publications at auction, for example this unofficial programme for a European Cup replay at Arsenal's Highbury stadium in 1964 (Illustration 11).



Illustration 11

Today, much of the trading is done through eBay, where even widely available recent programmes can trade at fifteen times their cover price, for example this Scottish Cup Final programme from 2016 (Illustration 12), is readily available if you are willing to pay £75.

As well as the programme fairs and auctions, collectors organisations, such as the British Programme Collectors Club and the Rutherglen Programme Exchange were formed. Various magazines were launched, though many had short lives. One survivor is *Programme Monthly & Football Collectable magazine*: it has been running for over 30 years and as well as providing articles on collecting and advertisements for traders it sponsors annual awards for the best programmes in the English football leagues.



Illustration 12

As with philatelists, collectors of football programmes often specialise. Most common is the collection of a favourite team, but other categories include big game matches, internationals, non-league, particular seasons, or a representative collection of programmes from a particular League.

The hobby remains a largely British pursuit. There are collectors in Europe and the rest of the world, but in many countries, such as Spain, the football programme is not as widely regarded as part of the match day experience, and certainly not as a collectible.

Whilst individual collectors provide a useful function in acquiring and, to a certain degree, preserving items, libraries extend this function by not only acquiring, preserving and cataloguing, but also making items available to historians, researchers and to the public.

However, there are few libraries that actually collect football programmes, with the consequence that these documents of our cultural heritage are not preserved within the public domain. One might argue that librarians, particularly those with responsibility for preserving our cultural heritage, have an obligation to ensure that this situation is changed.

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The British Library has a selection of historic and contemporary items, with some titles currently still being received. Their holdings date from the 1890s onwards and include some Scottish clubs, such as Kilmarnock's match programmes from 1929–1940.

At the National Library of Scotland we have been collecting football programmes for over 30 years, though only during the past ten years exercising UK Legal Deposit legislation to claim publications from British and Irish publishers.

We seek to acquire programmes from Scottish clubs, from representative matches featuring the national team or Scottish club teams, and from selected British teams with strong Scottish connections, through purchase and donation as well as Legal Deposit. With 42 senior clubs in Scotland playing league and cup matches, this amounts to around a thousand publications a season, to which must be added matches from other competitions such as the European leagues, the Highland league, Scottish Women's football, and representative fixtures.

The Library originally treated football programmes as serial publications. However, frequent changes of title, and variations in coverage, resulted in variant records and dispersed runs of titles for the same club. Whilst bibliographically correct, we felt that this approach did not serve users' search methods well, nor curators wishing to identify gaps in our collection.

The Library was already managing a growing collection of theatre programmes and had undertaken a reorganisation of its then dispersed collection in 2002. For these programmes bibliographic control and retrieval is provided by collection-level descriptions based on venue, and supported by a database providing additional searching by play, date or performing company. The approach has placed less of a burden on cataloguers, and the linked database gives better retrieval options than a serial record. However, with reduced cataloguing resources, the maintenance of the database has been a challenge.

Nevertheless we have adopted a similar approach for football programmes, effectively treating them as continuing resources, and bibliographically controlling them through a collection-level description. We use three basic categories for programmes, founded on issuing authority and chronological arrangement: club programmes are organised by club name then chronologically; match programmes for competitions held at neutral venues are arranged by the organising body, and competition; match programmes featuring the Scotland international teams are simply arranged by date.

[Hibernian Football Club match programmes].

Title: [Hibernian football club match programmes](#)

Other title: [Official programme Hibernian football club](#)
[Hibernian - Edinburgh - Scotland - 1996](#)
[Hibs](#)
[Hibs match magazine](#)
[Hibernian match magazine](#)
[Oquirrosh](#)
[Oquirrosh football club](#)

Corporate name(s): [Hibernian Football Club](#)

Language note: Programmes mainly in English with some in other languages depending on issuing body.

Publication date: 1996-

Format: Book

Physical description: v

Library note: Before May 2011 issues received were added to serial record entitled "Hibernian", and placed at NP 19.2172

Note: Programmes published under various titles over the years including: Official programme, [Hibernian](#), The Hibs, Hibs match magazine, Hibs match magazine and Oquirrosh.

Summary: A collection of programmes and match day magazines issued by [Hibernian Football Club](#) for matches at their home venue, and issued by other [clubs](#) for matches played against Hibs, outside Scotland, in all competitions.

Subjects: [Hibernian Football Club](#)
[Soccer programs](#)
[Soccer programs - Scotland - Edinburgh](#)
[Soccer matches](#)
[Soccer matches - Scotland - Edinburgh](#)

Call no:	General Reading Room (ground office)
Shelfmark:	SJA 1571
Number of items:	0
Status:	No information available
Call no:	General Reading Room (ground office)
Shelfmark:	SJA 4843
Number of items:	0
Status:	No information available

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External catalogues:

Illustration 13

However, in contrast to the method employed for theatre programmes we did not create a database, but list the programme details for each collection-level record using a spreadsheet giving date, opponents, competition and venue. This involves migrating existing lists onto spreadsheets. These spreadsheets will be accessible on our website from links in the collection-level records and will offer an additional search facility, and may include non-bibliographic data related to the event, such as attendance and match results. And importantly, the field structure will provide potential for future data conversion, for example as linked open data.

We have much work to do, but intend to use volunteers to undertake some of the work, guided by library staff.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, with this brief exposition of the football programme, I hope that I have demonstrated that its value goes beyond the ephemeral, and that it is worthy of collection, preservation and bibliographic control by our national libraries.

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