

TT No.082: 15/04/05 Ground/Club Focus: *Mike Latham* - Heart of Midlothian (SPL)

Wed 13 Apr 2005, SPL Hearts 1-2 Hibernian (att. - 17,676)

There are those grounds you are glad to tick off your list and do only once and others that you like to return to year after year for their special atmosphere and character. Tynecastle definitely falls into the latter category for the writer who considers it to be one of the most atmospheric club grounds in the country, especially for a highly charged local derby under floodlights.

Surrounded by impressively sturdily built tenements, hemmed in by a distillery and a school just off the A71 Gorgie Road, Tynecastle is an increasingly rare example of a near town centre ground and has an early example of a grandstand designed by Archibald Leitch, as detailed in Simon Inglis's superb new book, "Engineering Archie."

The other three stands at Tynecastle were constructed in the 1990s and rise up, seemingly almost sheer, from pitch level affording superb and intimate views of the action below.

Thankfully Tynecastle's immediate future now seems more assured after the takeover of the club by a Lithuanian businessman and the prospect of ground-sharing nearby Murrayfield with the Scottish RU has diminished.

The surroundings of Murrayfield come in handy for free- parking if arriving early enough and there is the opportunity to visit the SRFU shop or walk into the impressive 67,500 capacity stadium that housed Hearts' Uefa Cup-ties earlier this season. A bus ride into Edinburgh takes only ten minutes or so and a £2.20 all-day bus pass can be secured after 9-30am. If venturing into Edinburgh a trip on one of the four different open top bus routes with tour guides comes heartily recommended.

Pre match atmosphere can be sampled in the Tynecastle Arms, a heaving mass of humanity, where Wayne Foster's signed shirt is given pride of place. The writer used to watch Foster play for a then decidedly poor Bolton Wanderers team and often see him jogging the pathways and bridleways around the open cast mines of his hometown Atherton. The former England youth international striker moved to Hearts, where his late winner at Easter Road, after coming on as sub in a Scottish FA Cup-tie in 1994, earned him enduring fame in Gorgie

A page was devoted to Foster's goal in the superb 64-page Hearts programme that was good value for £2.50 while £24 secured a prime seat in the stand. Edinburgh derbies are certainly not for the faint-hearted and the fervour of both sets of supporters was something to behold, though the atmosphere and demeanour of the fans does not seem threatening for the neutral supporter (not that there were many of those).

Scoring twice in six second half minutes Hibs overcame a half-time deficit to win a frantic game played at 100mph and cement their claim for a third-placed finish.
Great stuff!

03/20