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# The origins, patronage and culture of association football in the west of Scotland, c. 1865-1902

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## Abstract

Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs, together known as the 'Old Firm', have received the lion's share of attention given to Scottish association football in both scholarly popular literature. During Scottish football's formative years, however, the ascendancy of the Old Firm was far from set in stone. The exhaustive study of these two extraordinary organisations, therefore, greatly distorts our understanding of Scottish football's Victorian origins. Both clubs were part of a far greater scene which included not only fellow 'senior', well-established clubs, but also any number of 'junior', 'juvenile' and non-league football clubs, as well as fledgling associations which oversaw the regulation of the young game. This thesis will examine the birth and growth of football in the west of Scotland, during a period stretching from the mid-1860s to the Ibrox disaster of April 1902.

Clubs were formed at any number of locations, from schools and churches, to factories and coal pits, as well as the many spaces in between. Clubs' respective connections in their own communities not only dictated how and why the game was played, but also determined the local support and patronage that each club received from local establishment figures. Victorian football organisations were as much social clubs as they were organisations dedicated to the playing and winning of the sport, and the sociability and conviviality of clubs determined their place in a complex social hierarchy, often leading to hedonistic excess. What pulled football away from this social scene, however, was its undisputed status as a gate money bonanza, one which saw not only the formation of a partisan supporter culture, but also the creation of a press dedicated to the ins and outs of the nascent game, both of which continued to fuel participation in the young sport. When the game itself became the main attraction and when victory became more important than camaraderie, professionalism was not far behind. Play-for-pay irrevocably changed the relationship between players, supporters, the press and football clubs' local communities. This thesis will examine the interrelationships between the players, the supporters, sport clubs' patrons and the press, as well as the local and national connotations present in the building and advancement of the newly-popular association game.

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The completion of the railroads to the West following the Civil War opened up vast areas of the region to settlement and economic development. White settlers from the East poured across the Mississippi to mine, farm, and ranch. African-American settlers also came West from the Deep South, convinced by promoters of all-black Western towns that prosperity could be found there. Chinese railroad workers further added to the diversity of the region's population. The loss of the bison and growth of white settlement drastically affected the lives of the Native Americans living in the West. In the conflicts that resulted, the American Indians, despite occasional victories, seemed doomed to defeat by the greater numbers of settlers and the military force of the U.S. government. West of Scotland Football Club is a rugby union club based in Milngavie, Scotland. Founded in 1865, West of Scotland are one of the oldest rugby clubs in the world, and one of the founding members of the Scottish Rugby Union. West have enjoyed a long and successful history, winning numerous Scottish Championships and producing an incredible number of international players, and a strong contingent of British and Irish Lions.