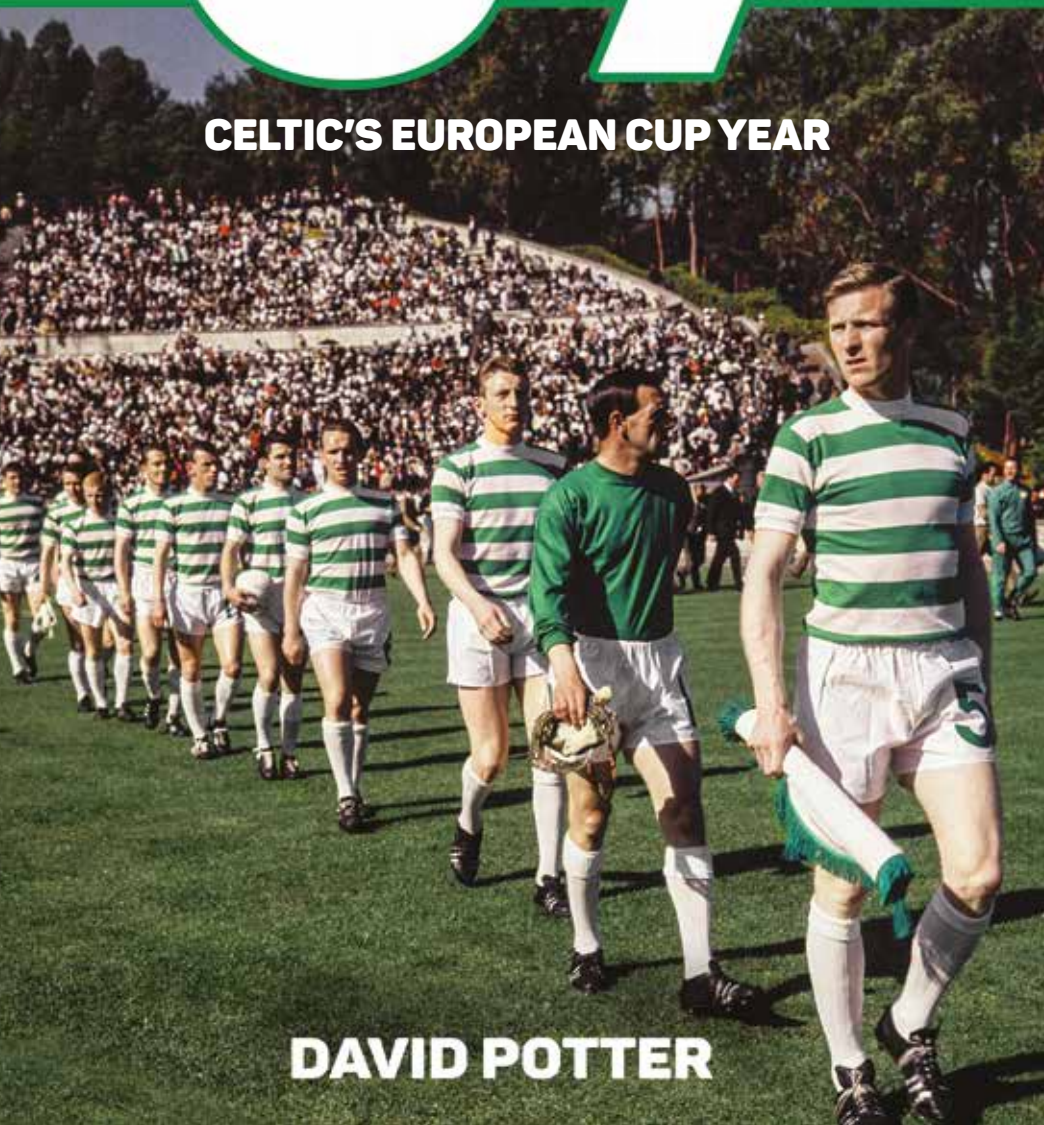


I REMEMBER

67 *well...*

CELTIC'S EUROPEAN CUP YEAR



DAVID POTTER

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As the bells tolled to usher in 1967, Celtic supporters were just a tad muted. The match at Dundee had seen the first reverse of the season when the team, at one point 2-1 up, had gone down 3-2 to Dundee United at Tannadice Park. It was generally agreed that Ronnie Simpson had had one of his less happy games, but it was also true that a defeat had been long overdue. Indeed it might have happened the previous week at Pittodrie in a disappointing 1-1 draw. A few weeks before that, on a hard pitch at Kilmarnock, the team had not looked too great either. So a defeat had been coming. But there was still such a lot to savour in 1966 and so much to look forward to in 1967. Shoulders were shrugged and folk said: “It won’t do them any harm.” A defeat can become a success very quickly – if one learns from it.

The Scottish League Cup and the Glasgow Cup were already on the sidebar. The Scottish League Cup Final at the end of October 1966 had been one long, tense occasion as Celtic, having scored through Bobby Lennox in the first half, held out against a desperate Rangers onslaught for the rest of the game. It was the day of Willie O’Neill’s famous

clearance off the line. Newspapers thought that Rangers had deserved at least a draw. Maybe, but Celtic were the winners, and the old order had changed. So often before, particularly in the calendar year of 1964, Celtic had been the better team, but Rangers had won. We were the masters now.

Progress had been made in Europe and we were now in the quarter-finals of the European Cup, following wins over Zurich and Nantes, the champions of Switzerland and France respectively. Liverpool, the champions of England, had blown up in Amsterdam and Celtic were now getting some reluctant (but no less sincere) praise from down south. Joe McBride had injured himself the previous week at Pittodrie, but Celtic had already strengthened their squad by signing Willie Wallace from Hearts and he had already shown signs of fitting in very well with Stein's attacking philosophy, alongside Steve Chalmers, Jimmy Johnstone, Bobby Lennox and others, with Bertie Auld and Bobby Murdoch orchestrating things in the midfield.

The atmosphere at Parkhead remained upbeat and positive, with optimistic messages flooding out in the weekly *The Celtic View*. The future seemed to offer a great deal. Indeed in comparison to where the team had been two years earlier, it was barely believable. There was even talk that Celtic could win that European Cup, something that no British team had done previously. Such talk had been confined for a spell to drunken men in pubs a few minutes before "chucking out" time on a Saturday night (rigidly 10pm in Scotland in 1966), but lately, more respectable sources, like Sam Leitch of *The Sunday Mirror*, had uttered similar sentiments.

But there was even more to it than that. For the first time since the days of Willie Maley in his prime before

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the First World War, Celtic were the first team talked about when football was mentioned. Briefly, the Empire Exhibition Trophy team of 1938 had enjoyed this status, but they did not last long at the top. Jock Stein had now shown not the least of his many talents by manipulating the media. Rangers were also doing reasonably well – they were still in Europe as well as maintaining a challenge in the league championship – but their exploits invariably came second even in newspapers like *The Scottish Daily Express*, which had hitherto been unashamedly pro-Rangers.

Events on the east side of the city were now far more interesting and thrilling. Rangers fans were quieter, more cowed and less confident as more and more people in the swinging sixties, with its emphasis on freedom and tolerance, were beginning to ask embarrassing questions about the perceived lack of Roman Catholics at Ibrox. The Scottish press, which had hitherto been quite happy to pretend that no religious discrimination existed at Ibrox, now began to give the problem a reluctant acknowledgement, with even a comparison made with apartheid in South Africa.

In short, Celtic had captured the moral high ground. They were now the leading team in Scotland. Even the Hogmanay defeat at Tannadice, which was the main talking point at New Year first footing parties, showed how far Celtic had come as the team was dissected, analysed and examined in an effort to find out what had gone wrong. Ronnie Simpson had had one of his rare poor games, Jim Craig would need to be brought back and we should have scored more in the first half. All these things were worked into the conversations, whisky in hand, so far had Celtic progressed. A few years ago, we had dreaded the New Year with a likely beating by Rangers.

There was little doubt that, in Jock Stein, Celtic had a mastermind at the helm. The signing of Willie Wallace in December was little short of brilliant. Wallace, a talented player for Hearts, was clearly becoming frustrated with their lack of success and their apparent lack of ambition. Their devastating loss of the Scottish League to Kilmarnock 18 months earlier, by serendipity the very same day that Celtic won the Scottish Cup of 1965, would affect them for decades. Yet Wallace was a great player and a prolific goalscorer, with one standout game for Hearts against Celtic at Tynecastle in January 1966 making Celtic sit up and take notice. Celtic had, more than once, expressed interest in Wallace, but so too had Rangers.

Stein was aware that Rangers might yet come in for Wallace. Their interest had to be taken seriously for Wallace was of a non-Catholic background. Had he been a Catholic, Stein could have bided his time, knowing that the player would come to Celtic anyway for Rangers would never have touched him. But in the case of Wallace, there was genuine competition. Having issued a few smokescreens about some bogus interest in another player, Stein waited until Rangers were in Germany in the early days of December, distracted on European business, before making his move. Rangers returned from Germany to discover that Wallace was a Celtic player. Stein also got the considerable additional benefit of being able to knock Rangers off the back pages yet again, his capturing of Willie Wallace even upstaging Rangers' impressive defeat of Borussia Dortmund.

It was also astonishingly perspicacious. Stein could not possibly have known just how bad Joe McBride's injury would be on Christmas Eve at Pittodrie, but he did know that there was some sort of problem with Joe's knee and that

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it might, sooner or later, become an issue. Celtic would thus be deprived of their star goalscorer. There were those who might have queried the necessity to buy another forward when McBride was Scotland's leading goalscorer (and he would stay that way, incidentally, all season, although he never kicked a ball after Hogmanay), but Jock, as always, knew best.

Stein had turned 44 in September. He was therefore at the height of his powers. He combined football knowledge, man-management and a magisterial air of dominating all conversation while knowing exactly what he was talking about. He was also passionate about the game and the club that, as he frequently said himself, were by no means his first love but were certainly his greatest and longest lasting. He loved the fans, and he loved communicating with them, never being afraid to travel to supporters' functions nor to talk to the people whom he recognised as the lifeblood of the game. "Football without fans is nothing," Stein once said. Bertie Auld frequently told how Jock would open the dressing room window just a little so that the players could see and hear the fans outside.

Slowly, Stein's campaign against hooliganism began to have an effect. Supporters occasionally let themselves down, but such occurrences were becoming less common. To a certain extent, it was because it was easier to support a winning team, but it was also because of Stein's constant appeals in *The Celtic View*, whether written by himself or ghosted by John McPhail or someone else. He made Celtic fans feel pride in their team, and if you are proud of your team and indeed yourself, there is no reason to act like a thug.

Football in Scotland was actually doing well, by some distance the most common topic of conversation in pub,

workplace and school playground, clearly outstripping horse racing and sex.

England winning the World Cup the previous summer was, however, sitting uneasily on Scottish shoulders, particularly as Scotland felt that, potentially at least, they could do better than their arch-rivals. But Scotland had failed to qualify – a blow to the prestige of Jock Stein, who had been given temporary control of the team – and the nation had been obliged to watch the success of their neighbours.

Scotland had beaten England three years in a row, in 1962, 1963 and 1964, drawn in 1965 and lost very narrowly, 3-4, at Hampden in April 1966. They were not far behind, it was felt, but England were not going to let anyone forget for a very long time that they had won the World Cup. Domestic football in England was also going through a boom, although every successful English team did have a fair smattering of Scottish players and indeed the bigger teams tended to have Scottish managers like Matt Busby, Bill Shankly and Tommy Docherty.

The domestic game in Scotland was also on the up. There was, of course, the perpetual Glasgow tension, with the pendulum now showing unmistakable signs of turning green and white, but there were other strong teams as well. The third force in Scotland at the time were Dunfermline Athletic, a team which had, of course, been built by Jock Stein in 1961 and, under Willie Cunningham, carried on the tradition. They perhaps lacked flair, but were determinedly and ruthlessly efficient, with a defence which showed a distinct reluctance to take any prisoners.

Kilmarnock, the league winners of 1965, were a team of similar character to Dunfermline. For a provincial team,

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they punched consistently above their weight, and would seldom give in without a fight. When managed by Willie Waddell, they were not always liked by Celtic supporters for their robust approach – with one particular game in August 1964 springing to mind – but now that ex-Celt Malky MacDonald had returned to manage them, they played football that was at least as successful, although not necessarily any more attractive, and they would have a good run in Europe this year.

The city of Dundee, with its two clubs in such close proximity, was an enigma. Dundee were capable of good performances – and it was the opinion of Bob Crampsey that Dundee's league-winning team of 1962 was the best team for sheer football that Scotland ever produced – but their directors had the fatal and self-destructive tendency to sell their best players for short-term gain at a time when they did not really have to do so. Ian Ure, Alan Gilzean and, this year, Charlie Cooke had all gone south with fatal long-term consequences for the Dens Park side. Dundee would still have their occasional good performances, but the club's transfer policy consistently disappointed fans, who began to stay away.

Their neighbours, Hogmanay's winners over Celtic, Dundee United, were more of a force to be reckoned with. They were the *parvenus*, the *nouveaux riches*, the *arrivistes* of Scottish football. They had only been promoted in 1960, thereby unleashing the power of a large but dormant support to achieve respectability in Scottish football. It was, of course, no accident that their rise coincided with a time when Celtic were in comparative decline. In the 1950s and previously, the massive Irish population of Dundee had uncompromisingly supported Celtic, and indeed the city

of Dundee had generally been looked upon as a Celtic-supporting area. But with the rise from obscurity of Dundee United (of undeniable Irish origins and who had, until 1923, been called the Dundee Hibs), the Dundee Irish now had a strong local team to identify with.

Wisely managed by Jerry Kerr and prudently stewarded by an enthusiastic board of directors who had been shrewd enough to run their own lottery, called Taypools, long before anyone else realised the money-making potential of such things, Dundee United consolidated their position, on one occasion in 1962 beating Rangers at Ibrox to help their neighbours Dundee win the league a month later. In recent years, they had invested in Scandinavia, bringing players like Finn Dossing, Mogens Berg, Lennart Wing and Orjan Persson to Tannadice. Always a difficult team to beat at home, their away form was less impressive but they were clearly here to stay. And, of course, on the last day of 1966, they had beaten Celtic.

A revival was at last forthcoming from Aberdeen, now that the grimly determined Eddie Turnbull was in charge. A good team in the mid-1950s, the Dons had subsequently slipped badly because of what some saw as complacent and unambitious management, and they had been more often in the bottom half of the league than the top. As if that were not bad enough, they had (rare in the developed world) suffered an outbreak of typhoid in 1964. Never an obsessive footballing city in the sense that Glasgow was, Aberdeen, a city which now had its own TV station, the enthusiastic but somewhat amateurish Grampian TV, had lost interest in football until the arrival of Turnbull. But there were clear signs now that the fishermen and farmers of the fertile North East were beginning to return. The

game on Christmas Eve – a disappointing 1-1 draw with Celtic – had seen a huge crowd.

Edinburgh's moment seemed to have passed, at least temporarily. Hearts' failure to win the league in April 1965 had left supporters bitter and disappointed, and Hibs, whose brief spell when Jock Stein was manager in 1964/65 had raised temporary hopes of a return to the glories of the Famous Five of the early 1950s, had failed to build on what Stein had done. Hibs, like Hearts, were certainly capable of hurting the Glasgow teams, but did not seem capable of winning anything themselves.

It would be nice to record that, in 1967, the nation of Scotland, in general terms, was at the crossroads of something dramatic. Most writers do say this sort of thing, but in fact this was not the case. Scotland was on a slow upward climb to prosperity. Everyone complained about their standard of living – everyone always does – but in fact things that had been slowly improving during the previous 15 years were continuing to get better. University education for those from a working-class background, like myself, was hardly the norm. On the other hand, it was now far from unusual. It was gentle and genteel progress under the benign, albeit scarcely charismatic guidance of Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

Slowly, perhaps painfully slowly, the Glasgow slums, many of which were not all that far from Celtic Park, were starting to be demolished. These monstrous remains of the Industrial Revolution should, of course, have been removed many decades earlier – and it is to the eternal shame of the Labour Party in Glasgow that this did not happen a lot sooner. But now, at last, men like Sam Allison were beginning to knock down these breeding grounds of disease

and filth. It would take a long time to happen, and in some cases the replacements were not a great deal better, but at least everyone now had some sort of living space, and, glory of glories, an indoor toilet! Amazingly in 1967, there were still a few houses without such a luxury or even running water. But change was happening.

Politically, Scotland stayed Labour. The Scottish National Party was now beginning to make itself heard, although still in its infancy, and Glasgow in particular returned Labour MPs by the barrow load, and with majorities that needed to be weighed rather than counted – unless, of course, you lived in the north-west of the city and read *The Glasgow Herald*. Most of Scotland read the Dundee-based *Sunday Post*. It was as good as any for the football, it was couthy and undeniably Scottish, and contained, of course, The Broons and Oor Wullie. Where it failed and failed totally, however, was in its politics. It tried to persuade people to vote Conservative. Its failure was astonishing in its scale.

We were, of course, in the middle of the “swinging sixties”. We baby boomers (those born immediately after the war when the soldiers returned) were now in our 20s or getting close to it. The National Health Service had guaranteed our survival, and there was now in place a generation that was not going to do what it was told. It was a well-educated generation as well – Scottish education was at its best in the late 1950s and early 1960s – and questions now began to be asked about why some people had more money than others, about why black people in South Africa and the United States were looked upon as second-class citizens, and closer to home, about why no Roman Catholics ever seemed to play for Rangers.

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The new generation seemed to be symbolised with its music. Although at New Year in particular, Andy Stewart and others fought a gallant rearguard action to protect traditional Scottish music, music had gone, for the past ten years, “pop”. You could call it rock ‘n’ roll, you could call it what you wanted, but it was noisy, here to stay and subversive. Men started wearing their hair longer, something that shocked the older people, who would raise their hands in horror and moan – until someone would point out that men like Jesus Christ and Robert Burns actually had long hair, as well as the four men from Liverpool called The Beatles, who were changing the world. “Aye, but the good Lord and the national bard kept their hair tidy” was the reply.

The churches, both Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic, began to lose members. Reasons were hard to analyse, but to a certain extent at least, it was a rebellion by the young. Churches usually, of course, have a dismal propensity to side with the rich against the poor, however much there may be some patronising regard for the “little black boys and girls” in vaguely distant lands. The Christian message had, for centuries, deliberately eschewed and ignored texts like “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven”, and although Jesus did a certain amount to provide loaves and fishes for the needy, nevertheless, according to the church, he seemed to expect his followers to do what they were told by the bourgeoisie, and in particular to stay away from such people as wanted governments to ban the bomb and feed people instead.

There was also the matter of sex. In recent years, there had appeared something called “the pill”, which women

could take, allowing them to have as much sex as they wanted without being trapped by pregnancy. The Roman Catholic Church immediately saw the obvious threat to their membership if this happened, and the Church of Scotland became even more worried in that it raised the uncomfortable spectre of their members having fun and enjoying themselves!

Religion in Glasgow, of course, often meant nothing other than the dismal sectarianism that befouled the city. Yet even that was being attacked, not least because Celtic's manager was a non-Catholic and was bringing obvious success. But there were also plays beginning to appear on television, satirising such divisions, particularly on the theme of a young girl bringing home an eligible and charming young man. Everything went well over the tea table. The fellow was good looking, had a job with prospects, his parents seemed to be decent people, a wedding the following June was being hinted at – until he mentioned the school that he had gone to, something that in the west of Scotland automatically “gave away” his religion. Immediately we got tears, tantrums and: “How could she do this to us? We brought her up right, then she wants to marry one of *them!*”

And where was your humble servant in the middle of all this? I was a first-year student doing Latin, Greek and Ancient History at St Andrews University in Fife. Bright enough to cope with anything they could throw at me academically, but totally overwhelmed and outgunned by the raucous English and American voices that assailed one's ears constantly, I struggled. Now, of course, experience of life will tell one that empty vessels do indeed make the most noise and that the loud voices concealed the same

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sort of anxieties that I suffered from, but I was only 18. I came from a good working-class background. My mother was couthy, canny, frugal and even a little parsimonious, whereas my father, a World War II veteran who now worked in a jute factory and talked constantly about Jimmy McGrory and Patsy Gallacher, was more prone to the romantic approach to life. His almost perpetual good humour often concealed the desire to be a rebel, but he was an armchair rebel.

I had been always well looked after and, as an only child and a late child, much loved and doted upon. I was also unashamedly parochial from the small town of Forfar. I was thus, when I went to St Andrews University, rather sheltered from some things, notably people who actually did say things like “yah!” and “sooper” and talked about “daddy’s yacht” without apparently having me on. In later years, taking the advice of Robert Burns, I would be able to “look and laugh at a’ that”, and on one occasion I got a piece of bitter revenge over the jet-set. It was after my father got a job as an oiler of factory equipment and I was able to say with a straight face “Oh, daddy dabbles in oil!” In your first year, totally naïve, disorientated and homesick, it was terrifying, intimidating and isolating. But in the same way as Maoist Chinese said that one could always be “protected by the thoughts of Chairman Mao” and his little red book of utterances, I felt that I had the thoughts of chairman Jock in *The Celtic View* every Wednesday to protect me.

In the case of the Americans, there was a certain affinity which could eventually be reached once you broke down the barriers of how rich America was, the almost inevitable tears late at night when discussing the break-up of “momma” and “papa’s” marriage in unhappy circumstances

some time previously and the patronising descriptions of Scotland being “quaint” and “cute”. The reason why so many Americans were here in Scotland was because it was one way of avoiding Vietnam. It is often said that there is no criticism by foreigners of America that is not also made in America itself, and this was true here. “Hey, hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?” was chanted as loudly by Americans as it was by Scottish students, with the added dimension, of course, that the American students after their year in St Andrews might well be invited to join the conflict, whereas we, under the Labour government of the admirable Harold Wilson, were free from that.

Americans, as a rule, did not follow football, or soccer as they called it. Those whose families were of Irish or Scottish origin tended to sympathise with Celtic, however, and I recall one night persuading one American on an exchange year from the College of William and Mary in Virginia to try to get the name changed. The English, however, were a totally different matter.

Words and phrases like “uppity” and “in your face” did not quite cover it. You see, they had, as they kept telling us, won the World Cup in summer 1966. It was painful for us, and I recall telling a German student shortly after my arrival in St Andrews that I had thought that England were lucky to beat Germany. His look was one of puzzlement and even hurt before I added that I was talking about the World Cup Final rather than events of 20 years before that. He immediately laughed and joined in the condemnation of the Soviet linesman and the ball that was never over the line. “Und why did they get to play all zeir games at Vembley?” he shouted with the same sort of passion and venom that his father talked about the Treaty of Versailles.

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The English students, of whom there were a great number, of all social classes, were, when football was mentioned, quite unbearable. Yet I soon discovered that they were by no means monolithic. The north-south divide was quite pronounced and Arsenal supporters hated Liverpool, while Manchester United were almost universally despised. But they did not hate Scotland with anything like the venom that Scots hated England. In such circumstances, a certain admiration began to grow for Celtic, particularly after the demise of Liverpool from Europe, and the feeling was even expressed that it would be nice to see a Scottish team win the European Cup.

Rangers supporters struggled at St Andrews University. Although the town of St Andrews has a dismal tradition of religious intolerance, with chaps getting burned for their faith and bishops getting murdered and thrown out of windows for reasons that were hard to understand, nevertheless, by 1966, the stress was very much on racial and religious acceptance. The abolition of apartheid in South Africa was looked upon as a necessity (apart from one or two people of entrenched views in the Conservative Society) and in that climate, it was difficult to defend Rangers' religious policy. Indeed I can honestly say that in the same way I never encountered a single American who defended his country's policy in Vietnam, I similarly never met a single Rangers supporter who uncompromisingly defended the Struth and Lawrence policy of religious discrimination.

And girls? The necessity to get oneself a woman is a basic, biological and social one. Yet it was not easy. Churches were united in telling you "hands off", yet advice was forthcoming from students' organisations and

enlightened doctors and nurses about how to set about it. For me, there was a particular problem. Intimidated, as I say, by the raucous voices of know-it-all people, and from my limited background with little general conversation except how Celtic were doing, conversation and chatting up were difficult. Yet there was a girl who entered my life, from the north of England, who had spent most of her life in Fife and had a soft spot for Dunfermline Athletic. But two or three weeks of involvement frankly scared me, and I drifted away from her, mainly in the direction of the real and constant love of my life – those who wore the green and white jerseys. I have often regretted this abandonment of that little girl, with so many parallels to the way in which Aeneas abandoned Dido in Virgil's *Aeneid*, and maybe I should have made more of a go of it.

Such was the state of my life when the bells tolled to bring in 1967. The rest of the world was OK. I had loads of friends with whom I had grown up. They supported various teams and discussion was often animated but basically good-natured. My parents were in good health, proud of their son who had now survived his first difficult term and, in the case of my father, the constant hope that "Jock might do it this year". Everyone moaned about the Labour government, but in fact they were far better off than they had ever been. A few people (some who should have known a great deal better) listened to the baleful talk of Enoch Powell – who wanted to repatriate black people to wherever they came from – but you could easily subject them to ridicule and, generally speaking, life was good.

New Year's Day 1967 was a Sunday. A frost came down on New Year's night and effectively knocked out three Celtic games. The January 2 game against Clyde at

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Parkhead was off, as indeed was an attempt to play it again on Wednesday, January 4, but the big disappointment was the postponement of the game at Ibrox on January 3, particularly as the weather was nice, crisp and bright and many fans had arrived in Glasgow in full expectation of the game being on. Other games were played at places like Kilmarnock and St Johnstone that day, but significantly perhaps, there was no great protest from either Rangers or Celtic over Mr Syme's decision at Ibrox. I had travelled to Glasgow by car with some friends, and on the way back saw the second half of St Johnstone v Aberdeen, a surprise win for the Saints.

Celtic felt that the trip to Ibrox would have been a good day to bounce back from their Tannadice disappointment and to emphasise the superiority that had already been shown in three Old Firm games this season already in the Glasgow Cup, the league game at Parkhead and the League Cup Final. But possibly there was a silver lining as well to the postponement in that it gave players an extra few days to recover from knocks inevitably sustained at this time of year. The players had been told to meet at Celtic Park at 11am prior to travelling to Ibrox. On hearing that the game was off, Stein immediately organised a practice game and made sure that cameras were there as well. He was never one to miss a propaganda opportunity.

The first game of the momentous year of 1967 therefore was the visit of Dundee to Celtic Park on January 7. That the game was on at all said a great deal for the determination and commitment of the Celtic backroom staff. Rangers' game at Pittodrie was off, so Celtic knew that a win would give them an advantage. The pitch was playable but tricky, but 37,000 saw Celtic off to a good start in 1967 with a 5-1

win, with two goals from Willie Wallace, and one each from Bobby Murdoch, Jimmy Johnstone and Charlie Gallagher. But the most significant change was the return of Jim Craig and the playing of Tommy Gemmell on his more natural side on the left of the park.

Charlie Gallagher's goal was a particularly good one, and *The Celtic View* carried a story of how Jock Stein broke the news to Bertie Auld that Charlie was to take his place. Bertie's reply was a surprising one, namely that he thought that Charlie was better on the hard ground. Bertie may have had tongue in cheek, or maybe was secretly glad not to play on hard pitches, but it allowed Stein to state that "that is typical of the team spirit that leads to success".

If things were booming at one Glasgow club, the same could hardly be said at another, for the impoverished Third Lanark had major unrest among their players. The poor chaps could not get a hot shower after one of their games, and had to make do with cold water. This seemed to have something to do with Thirds' inability to pay their bills, and the writing was now on the wall with ever more clarity for the Cathkin side. They would not see the year out.

The weather eased to become a little milder in midweek and Celtic, with commendable speed, arranged their game against Clyde for Wednesday, January 11 at Celtic Park. *The Evening Times* used the word "dazzling" to describe Celtic's 5-1 win and went into overdrive to talk about one of the goals, scored by Tommy Gemmell. The paper described it as "one of the finest goals notched at Celtic Park" – an ambitious claim when one recalls Sandy McMahon, Jimmy Quinn and Jimmy McGrory – after he met a ball in mid-air with his right foot and "bulleted home" from 30 yards. Once again, the crowd was large and appreciative – over

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38,000 for a Wednesday night – and they positively erupted at such brilliance. They departed joyously into that cold January night singing their anthem “We Shall Not Be Moved” and also a new song from an American group called The Monkees, which ran

“I thought love was only found in fairytales,
All right for someone else but not for me.
But love was out to get me, that’s the way it seemed.
Disappointment haunted all my dreams.
And then I saw her face. Now I’m a believer..”

There were indeed many people who believed that there was something special going on at Celtic Park.

Charlie Gallagher played superbly that night, but his absence for the following game, though not noticed or commented on at the time, was nevertheless hugely significant in the history of the club. It was the first time that Simpson, Craig and Gemmell; Murdoch, McNeill and Clark; Johnstone, Wallace, Chalmers, Auld and Lennox – the future Lisbon Lions – played together as a team. It was a decision taken by Jock Stein once he tested the Muirton Park pitch, feeling perhaps that the slightly softer nature of the pitch might not suit the silky play of Charlie as much as it would do the slightly more gritty approach of Bertie Auld.

Unaware of the significance of all this, over 21,000 made their way to Muirton Park, Perth to see Celtic take on St Johnstone. It was also one of the very few times that TV cameras had ever been at Muirton to record highlights for the evening’s programme. St Johnstone were a team who had given Celtic a great deal of trouble in the recent past – in 1964/65, for example, they had beaten Celtic both home and away – and on this mild January afternoon, such were the crowds outside the small provincial ground

(sadly no longer with us – a supermarket now, since the move to McDiarmid Park in 1989) that the kick-off had to be delayed by ten minutes. Even at that, the first half was well advanced before most of the stragglers made their way inside the ground.

They saw a tense first half, with the Perth men, whose cup final this was, giving as good as they got – as they always did when Celtic arrived. On at least two occasions, Ronnie Simpson was called into action before half-time, once seeming to stave his hand. At the other end, the St Johnstone defence, well marshalled by Benny Rooney (son of the Celtic trainer Bob), was holding out, although the pairing of Bobby Murdoch and Jimmy Johnstone, on more than one occasion, gave them a little bother.

We were well into the second half before a piece of brilliance by Jimmy Johnstone put Celtic ahead. Having done it once, Jimmy then did it again, and late in the game Chalmers and Lennox finished the job to give Celtic a 4-0 scoreline, which was perhaps a little hard on the industrious and by no means talentless Saints. Bobby Murdoch would always say that, apart from Rangers, the side that gave Celtic the most trouble in the Stein era was St Johnstone. The fact the goals were scored late in the game – a frequent occurrence in 1967 – said a great deal about Celtic's training methods under Neil Mochan.

What gave Bob Kelly and Jock Stein as much satisfaction as anything was a letter received from Bobby Brown, the manager of St Johnstone. Bobby Brown had been Rangers' goalkeeper in the late 40s and early 50s and had been anything other than the Hun that Celtic supporters loved to hate. Indeed he had been famous for his gentlemanly demeanour and sporting behaviour, occasionally even

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being known to apologise to ball boys behind his goal when Sammy Cox and Willie Woodburn used foul language. Here, he went out of his way to praise Celtic and their fans for their good-natured support. When one recalled several previous horrific displays of Celtic hooliganism in the past at Perth – one particularly awful Wednesday night in August 1961 came to mind – we realised just how far Celtic had progressed.

The following midweek saw Stein busy giving interviews and keeping the pot boiling as much as he could for the tests to come. The European Cup quarter-final draw had been made and dates for Vojvodina Novi Sad (Wednesdays March 1 and 8) had been arranged, and Celtic had also arranged to play a friendly against similar opposition on February 7, when Dinamo Zagreb were coming to Parkhead. Much was the talk about a new formation that Celtic were going to deploy that night – possibly an attempt to get a large crowd to see a friendly – but the real purpose, he said, was to see how Yugoslav football was played and to find out more about Vojvodina Novi Sad.

The game against Hibs at Parkhead on Saturday, January 21 was in doubt because of the heavy rain that had fallen. That did not, however, deter 41,000 fans from turning up at Celtic Park to see another superb Celtic performance. The heavy conditions persuaded Stein that John Hughes should get the nod over Bobby Lennox, for Hughes had the reputation of being one of the best “bad weather” players in the business, such was his strength and determination to charge through the mud, whereas the slightly more fragile Lennox preferred dry conditions.

The team won comfortably 2-0 and the game was characterised by a brilliant Willie Wallace goal, showing

that Celtic had been right to go for him the previous December. It was in the 13th minute when he picked up a pass from John Clark, beat a man, sidestepped a crunching tackle from another and then crashed home from outside the box with a shot that beat the goalkeeper and at least three other defenders. Parkhead simply erupted at such brilliance. Little wonder that the Celtic fans had a banner which said simply “Oor Wullie”, after the famous *Sunday Post* character. The second goal was a little more fortuitous. A Jimmy Johnstone corner kick found the head of Bertie Auld, who steered the ball for goal – and it was speeding there when the ball hit Steve Chalmers on the head and was diverted into the net. But a goal is a goal, and this one, along with that of Willie Wallace, was enough to beat a determined Hibs side. This was just before half-time and although Celtic pressed, there was no further scoring. Elsewhere, Rangers edged home against Falkirk and the league table stayed the same, with Celtic five points ahead of Rangers, although Rangers had a game in hand. (Only two points for a win in 1967).

Meanwhile, Celtic and Stein retained the diplomatic initiative with a very crafty piece of thinking. The New Year fixture between Rangers and Celtic still had to be played. It was generally agreed in 1967 that, if possible, playing Old Firm games in the dark nights of January and February was a bad idea given the hooligan problem and the necessity for tight policing. This was probably nonsense. Behaviour at evening games is usually a great deal better, for there is less opportunity to get tanked up on alcohol. But “darkened terracing” was a fine bargaining counter, as we will see.

Celtic now suggested the Monday Spring Holiday of March 27. On the surface, this seemed a great idea. There

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was a long tradition of playing football matches on that day, the daylight would be better, the game could even kick off in the afternoon and a big crowd could be guaranteed. It seemed ideal. But Celtic offered this date, knowing that Rangers would refuse. For one thing, Rangers would be heavily involved in Europe, playing Real Zaragoza the previous Wednesday, and they also had Hibs on the Saturday. But Celtic also knew, although they pretended that they didn't, that John Greig, the captain of Rangers, was due to be married that day.

Thus Celtic offered that date, knowing what the reply would be. Rangers would thus give the impression that they were putting off the evil hour when they had to play Celtic. They would be accused of cowardice, and as it happened, the game eventually had to be played after the official end of the season. Rangers, of course, might have suggested another date, but failed to do so at this point (they would eventually offer something but in less happy circumstances, and thus lost a certain credibility in the eyes of their supporters).

To what extent this psychological battle affected them in the run-up to the Scottish Cup games, we can never be sure, but there can be little doubt that the events of Saturday, January 28 rocked Scottish football in a way that had never happened before. This day is still talked about in hushed or gleeful tones, depending on what side of the divide one lives. The East Coast Line from Aberdeen to London travels through Berwick. Shielfield Park is just visible from the train. People have still been known to stand up for a quick glimpse of where it all happened.

The midweek before this day was abnormally quiet. Indeed it would have been a fine week for the Old Firm



game had it not been for the spurious fear of “darkened terracings”. Newspapers showed pictures of Celtic players playing golf at Seamill ahead of the visit of Arbroath to Parkhead in the Scottish Cup and told how Jock Wallace, the goalkeeper and player-manager of Berwick Rangers, was going to take his men to the cinema the night before the game against Glasgow Rangers on Saturday. Rangers were worried about the injury sustained by Ron McKinnon, but hoped to have him fit for the game.

The town of Berwick is technically in England, but in football terms Berwick Rangers are very much part of the Scottish League, even though a few years previously the “Ibrox gangsters” (as the Celtic fanzine *The Shamrock* put it) had tried to remove them and a few others from the league. Berwick made a special effort to be nice to their visitors, who had shamelessly wrecked the place on their last visit in 1960. There would, for example, be a special programme and the lucky number would be a trip to Zaragoza to see Rangers in the Cup Winners’ Cup in March. The Rangers team were going to stay in Dunbar (where the Hannoverian general Sir John Cope had also stayed the night before his disaster at Prestonpans in 1745), and the town of Berwick, although hoping to do a good trade before the 2.45pm kick-off, made a wise decision not to allow the opening of pubs at 5pm. In England, pubs normally did not open until 6pm, by which time the undesirables would be heading north.

All this stuff was in the press, who were clearly looking for something to get excited about. Celtic v Arbroath, Berwick v Rangers were generally not good newspaper copy. The previous year, Rangers had been drawn at Ross County, then a poor Highland League team, and similar campaigns

had been deployed to whip up interest. Generally speaking, cup “giant-killing” did not really happen in Scotland very often, in direct contrast to what happened in England. Dundee had blown up in Fraserburgh in 1959, but that was the only time that anyone could remember any great humbling of the mighty.

Celtic at home to Arbroath was even more difficult to write about. Arbroath, where Glaswegians still went for their holidays, were by nature a Second Division team. They had been in the First Division once or twice, but the top of the Second Division was their natural habitat. Celtic had a few injuries – Jimmy Johnstone, Bobby Lennox and Joe McBride – but that was hardly a problem in the projected beating of Arbroath. By the morning of the game, Ronnie McKinnon of Rangers had recovered. In fact, there were many exciting ties on that day – Dundee v Aberdeen, Kilmarnock v Dunfermline, Hearts v Dundee United, Morton v Clyde, Motherwell v East Fife, but that night, there was only one game that was talked about as *The Evening Times*, *The Evening Citizen*, *The Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Sporting Post* all sold copies far in excess of what they would have expected. The Sunday papers even ordered extra print runs.

The day was very mild for late January. There were even a few moments of sunshine, although mainly cloud cover was the order of the day. A crowd of about 40,000 appeared at Celtic Park, quite clearly the largest crowd that Arbroath had played before for some time, and they were rewarded with some good football played by Celtic. Indeed until they tired in the second half, the men from Angus (Scottish Cup record holders for their 36-0 defeat of Aberdeen Bon Accord in 1885) were by no means disgraced. They were

given a generous reception as they appeared, something that was appreciated by the team, which contained quite a few Celtic supporters.

Murdoch, Gemmell and Chalmers all scored good goals before half-time on a soft pitch, and half-time was spent in the thought of more to come. Someone even said that Berwick were 1-0 up on Rangers at half-time (they had kicked off a quarter of an hour before Celtic), but we knew that that couldn't be true. For one thing, how would we know? The Scottish Home Service on the radio was traditionally poor, with one grudging game broadcast at 4.10pm, although the English BBC did make some sort of effort to give score flashes. The Parkhead tannoy system, notoriously slow and inefficient, did seem to say something about Berwick, though, and it was greeted with a loud cheer.

But there was the Parkhead half-time scoreboard. If you bought a programme, it gave you a letter for each game, and the letter would appear on the scoreboard with the half-time score beside it. You didn't really need to buy a programme in fact, for a knowledge of the alphabet would give you an indication of the game you were looking for. Alphabetically that day, Berwick came first (Aberdeen, Airdrie and Ayr were not playing at home) and the score did undeniably read 1-0. The trouble was that the scoreboard operators often got it wrong, and were, as far as Rangers were concerned, not above "having us on" now and again. Sometimes they made it 5-0 or 0-5 just for a laugh. So, "aye, aye", we all said, and treated the affair with a certain amount of scepticism. In any case, even if it were true, Rangers would equalise and then win in the second half.

The second half began at Parkhead. Charlie Gallagher headed the ball over the bar, but it didn't really matter as

Celtic were so far ahead. The Parkhead crowd began to get a little bored and, as often happens in such circumstances, began to cheer on the good play of Arbroath, particularly those players who had said in the newspapers earlier in the week that they were Celtic supporters. The game was fizzling out a little, although the angry figure of Stein was seen gesticulating and demanding more effort.

But then, with only about a quarter of the game left, there seemed to be some disturbance in the Main Stand, all centring around a man with a transistor radio (by no means as common in 1967 as they would become in later years). Even the police, fearing some disorder or indeed that some luckless spectator had taken ill, looked up, but then arms began to be waved, the air began to be punched, people jumped up and down, promiscuous hugs were given to whoever was sitting or standing near you.

Tommy Gemmell suddenly looked pleased with himself and told the players, even the Arbroath ones. Some were stunned, others smiled while Billy McNeill, ultra-professional as always, was seen to be calming everyone while Jock Stein looked even angrier. The news spread all round Celtic Park, along the Rangers End, through the Jungle but even before it reached the Celtic End, everyone guessed what it was all about. “The Huns are f***ed” was the cry, and very soon “The Huns are out of the cup, The Huns are out of the cup, High oh, my daddie oh, the Huns are out of the cup” was sung with gusto round the ground. Bertie Auld’s fourth goal a few minutes later was greeted with an almighty cheer, and the game finished with everyone ecstatic, singing, dancing and hugging with even the more douce denizens of the stand smiling and shaking hands with each other.

But was it all true? Cruel deceptions had been practised before – in fact it had been common practice at every Celtic game in the past for someone to start a rumour about the defeat of Rangers, and as there is no limit to what people will believe if they want to believe it, it would always gain credence – but this time, everyone seemed to be convinced it was true. Yet we were still aware of Joseph Goebbels, who had said the bigger the lie, the more people are likely to believe it, and that it was far easier to kid on a crowd than it was an individual. It was only when we reached a chip shop, now long demolished in London Road, which had a television on the wall, that we were entirely convinced.

It is a shame that this result overshadowed everything in Scottish football, nay in Scottish cultural life, for many weeks, for there was other football played that day. Aberdeen, for example, had crushed Dundee 5-0 at Dens Park, Dundee United had eliminated Hearts at Tynecastle and in what TV would show that night to have been an excellent game of football, Kilmarnock and Dunfermline drew 2-2 at Rugby Park. And, of course, poor East Fife had even more cause to be unhappy. They too had “giant-killed” that day, beating Motherwell at Fir Park, but their efforts were to be marginalised.

But Berwick was the word. In truth, however, this had been coming to Rangers for some time. They had only beaten Falkirk 1-0 the previous week because a Falkirk player had missed a sitter in the last minute, and their defeat to Dunfermline before the New Year had been a comprehensive one. But everyone knew who had really beaten them at Berwick that day. It was, of course, Celtic, their obsession, their nemesis, their Waterloo. The early sixties of seeming impregnability (apart from the occasional

fall from grace to Dundee or Kilmarnock) had now gone. They were now up against a club of their own financial status, a new, redefined, resurrected, revanchist club and, for the next 20 years, the hegemony of Scottish football would pass quite clearly and unarguably, apart from one or two isolated seasons, from Ibrox to Celtic Park.

Glynn Edwards of *The Glasgow Herald* sounded like Winston Churchill when he intoned portentously: “Never in the history of Scottish football has there been a result to match this one, and because Rangers are Rangers, it will inevitably lead to serious repercussions.” Rangers had sustained one piece of bad luck in the serious injury to Willie Johnston, but he had been replaced by Davie Wilson, a man of whom it had once been said that the word “Rangers” was engraved on his heart. Maybe, but the door would soon be shown to Davie, as a career at Dundee United and Dumbarton beckoned. The shockwaves were widespread and long lasting, but somehow in keeping with the Rangers tradition. Rangers were already famous for their knee-jerk reaction to a defeat with their “somebody must carry the can” philosophy. In this case, the support, almost to a man, demanded the heads of forwards Jim Forrest and George McLean. These players would go on and continue to forge good careers for themselves with Aberdeen and Dundee respectively, when slightly more enlightened management at Ibrox would have kept them for at least a spell, even after this particularly bad game. But Scot Symon now said loudly and publicly: “I can no longer defend this team.”

Another tradition is that the Ibrox defence must be sacrosanct. There were one or two poor performances at Berwick in the defence as well, but no massive changes were forthcoming there and, of course, the other tradition

was that if the team were ever defeated by a smaller side, Rangers would buy their star man. On this occasion they even went one better, for the hero of Berwick, goalkeeper and player-manager Jock Wallace eventually became the Ibrox manager. Poor Sammy Reid, the scorer of the goal, must have wondered why he never got the call. Andy Penman of Dundee, who could often score an opportunistic goal, revealed that opportunism and generally being a “chancer” was part of his make-up when he submitted to the Dundee management his third transfer request of the season a few days after Berwick’s victory. Now where, one wondered, would he fancy going to?

For Celtic, this was all a major bonus to their own team’s good performance. It was, of course, played down and only hinted at in *The Celtic View*, which had Jock Stein saying, without mentioning any names, that there were surprises in the Scottish Cup and that “one came from a totally unexpected source”. Everyone knew who he meant, for it was the main and indeed the only topic of conversation among Celtic fans. It meant basically that the major obstacle to Celtic winning the Scottish Cup had now been removed. Granted, there were still Aberdeen, Hibs, Dundee United and the winner of the Kilmarnock v Dunfermline replay, but Rangers were out. Celtic could now relax at least for a spell after the draw was made, for it paired them at Celtic Park against the winners of Elgin City and Ayr United (it would be Elgin City who won through in another minor piece of giant-killing), and how *The Evening Times* of Monday, January 30, 1967 must have hurt Rangers supporters. It tactlessly said that the Scottish Cup should now be called the “Glasgow” Cup, for all remaining Glasgow teams had been drawn at home –

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Celtic, Partick Thistle, Clyde and Queen's Park. The fallers were, of course, Rangers and Third Lanark, a club now heading inexorably towards liquidation.

In the meantime, the shadow boxing continued about the New Year fixture. After March 27 was rejected by Rangers, the Ibrox side now offered February 15. It might have made sense for Celtic to accept this on the grounds that Rangers would be on their knees and a sitting duck for Celtic, but Stein thought it was perhaps better to prolong the agony and knocked back the suggestion. He cited the need to prepare for the European games, the fear of "darkened terracings" and a possible resurgence of crowd violence, and the distinctly specious and unconvincing claim that the bad weather hadn't entirely gone away, and that we would therefore have to rearrange the game yet again if it were to be postponed.

In truth, Celtic were indeed playing games. It is often stated that in cricket, for example, when a captain has a decision to make about whether to bat or bowl, or to declare or to enforce a follow-on, he should always put himself in the position of the opposition, decide what they would really hate to have to do – then make them do it. Stein realised that Rangers, after their humiliation in Berwick, would really want to come back strongly against Celtic at their home ground in order to win back their supporters' credibility. He decided to deny them that opportunity.

And thus ended the month of January 1967. It had been a good month for Celtic with four good wins. Indeed December, with its two draws and one defeat, had in some ways been atoned for. The bad news, of course, was the injury of Joe McBride, which was indeed long term. But goalscoring did not seem to be a huge problem with Willie

Wallace and Steve Chalmers around, and Stein's decision to bring back Jim Craig and put Tommy Gemmell to his more natural side seemed to have been the correct one, for only two goals had been conceded in January.

But there was more than that to be happy about. Billy McNeill was still imperious, Ronnie Simpson, or "faither" as he was called because of his age (he was now 36), was more than capable in the goal. He was possibly a little on the weak side facing shots from a distance, but he was a great reader of a game, with an astonishing ability to be in the right place at the right time. Jimmy Johnstone had had a bad spell with injuries and a loss of form, but was now clearly on the way back, but by some distance, as discerning spectators noticed, the star man of that team, of all the stars, was right-half Bobby Murdoch.

We recalled his early days as a mediocre inside-right, and how he had been moved all over the forward line, where he had often looked like a fish out of water. He had had more than his fair share of abuse from impatient and frustrated supporters until the footballing brain of Jock Stein had spotted that he was simply in the wrong position, and that he was far better pushing the ball forward rather than waiting for it to come to him. The fanzine *The Shamrock* had spotted that too as early as 1964. Why didn't Bob Kelly?

Words like "world class" were freely applied to Murdoch when he took over that position. He could take a grip of a game, distribute the ball, read the wiles of Johnstone and the speed of Lennox, and he also retained the ability to burst through himself and sometimes score. In a club which had always been rich in right-halves – Sunny Jim Young, Johnny Gilchrist, Peter Wilson, Chick Geatons, Bobby Evans, Pat Macauley and Pat Crerand – Bobby Murdoch was now

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looked upon as the best. It had been a slow process, but he was now a complete player. Years later, in his memoirs, Jimmy McGrory would say that Bobby Murdoch was better than Peter Wilson, and there could be no greater accolade than that.

As the mild month of January 1967 gave way to the rainier but still mild month of February, Celtic had little reason to fear the future. Stern tests awaited, but the resources to deal with them seemed to be there. This was also true, to a certain extent, of my own life as I slowly came to terms with my first year in the august demesne of St Andrews University. Gone was the homesickness and terror of the loudmouth English and American students. They were still there, but I had developed strategies to deal with them, which included retaliation by talking in a loud voice about Celtic, but there was also the better one of ignoring them, and not letting them upset me, or know that I was cowed by them. In time, we became tolerant of each other's culture, and, in many cases, friends.

Study continued, and I began to enjoy life. I had the sense to stay away, to a large extent, from alcohol (God knows, I had seen enough of that in my family when I was young) and not to get too involved with women. The one that I had been seeing before Christmas was now not so much dumped as forgotten about (maybe, indeed certainly, a mistake and without doubt something that I am now ashamed of) and a romance briefly flickered with a girl in the Greek class, but neither of us had the social ability to cope with what was required. We never really got going and maybe, at that stage of my life, it was no bad thing.

You see, I had the other great obsession.