

AN UNUSUAL FA CUP MATCH

4 October 1890

Cliftonville 4 Macclesfield 3

FA Cup First Qualifying Round

Cliftonville: Clugston, Leslie, Gibb, Crawford, Barry, Cooke, Browne, Small, Williamson, Neill, Turner

Macclesfield: Kent, Millington, Braddock, Nolan, Birchenall, Bolton, Burgess, Heath, Hall, Howarth, Hindley

A most unusual FA Cup tie for Macclesfield who were drawn away against a Belfast side which was full of international players. Cliftonville, rather surprisingly, were members of the Midland qualifying division for the cup competition. The 1890-91 season was only the third occasion when qualifying rounds had been used and the first where a Preliminary round had been introduced.

The Macclesfield players had made the rough crossing to Northern Ireland on 3 October, the day before the match. *The Belfast News-Letter* reporter described the match as the most important fixture of the day [in Northern Ireland] and gave Macclesfield much credit for their application..

Cliftonville defended the mountain goal end in the first half with Macclesfield kicking off. The opening exchanges were fairly even, the Macclesfield forwards were complimented for their passing game. At one stage Neill for Cliftonville sent in a firm shot which the Macclesfield 'keeper Kent kicked out of the ground into the Waterworks resulting in a delay in play whilst the ball was retrieved! Macclesfield went close to scoring through Tom Burgess, but after 30 minutes Neill gave the home side the lead. This was short lived as Burgess equalised for Macclesfield. The score remained 1-1 at half time.

From the start of the second half Cliftonville attacked, putting the Macclesfield goal under pressure, with Jack Kent in action saving shots 'with fists and feet' and it was inevitable that Cliftonville would take the lead again, on this occasion through a goal by Turner. John Hall then equalised for Macclesfield amid protests from the home side that the goal was off-side, but they were overruled by the referee. Cliftonville came back again to take the lead for the third time, Williamson making the score 3-2. By now the game was becoming rather scrappy but Macclesfield did not give up with the Silkmen's Jack Hindley levelling the score for the third time. The score remained at 3-3 at full time.

Evidently with no rule in place for extra time, the two sides consulted and it was agreed that a further 30 minutes be played. The first half of extra time resulted in no further goals being added but Browne scored the fourth, and winning goal, for the home side ten minutes into the second half of extra time. After the goal, Macclesfield pressed forward and had the ball in the back of the net only for it to be disallowed for off-side. And so the match finished 4-3 in favour of the home side but Macclesfield had played well against a strong side.