

Look up the term Gullane sands in any thesaurus and the list of alternatives is sure to include torture, suffering, anguish and pain, although perhaps cruelty is taking it just a bit far!

The sands were just twenty minutes from Jock Wallace's home town of Wallyford but it wasn't until he read of the exploits of a certain Herb Elliot that he began to take more than a passing interest. Elliot was an Australian runner who had broken the world record for the 1,500 metres before going on to grab the gold medal at the Rome Olympic Games of 1960.

His Australian coach, Percy Cerutti had devised this type of training to build up strength of leg, lung and character, so much so that it soon became the accepted training model for Aussie and New Zealand middle distance runners. Wallace reasoned that what was good enough for Olympic gold medallists was good enough for his players. Elliot honed his fitness by running up and down sand dunes and that got Wallace, a real fitness fanatic, thinking.

He had known all about Gullane, as it was close to home, but not as a tool which could transform men into boys. When he arrived for his second stint at Berwick, this time with extra responsibilities, he decided to take the players to the seaside – although there were no buckets and spades in evidence.

He took the Wee Gers players to Gullane for extra training in the lead up to Berwick's famous win over Rangers in 1967, and when he moved on to Hearts, Gullane was the pre-season haunt of choice. So by the time he arrived at Ibrox, the former jungle fighter knew these dunes like the back of his hand, and would've 'enjoyed' a far better relationship than Herb Elliot had with 'his' sand. The players who suffered – and threw up – called it Murder Hill. They won't ever forget the ridiculous 65-degree sandy mounds where big Jock turned his Gers stars into machines.

Wallace said: "It was sheer torture to those attempting the run for the first time but it got the players to a peak of fitness that I wanted, and the fittest player on the dunes was Willie Johnston."

Alex MacDonald was another of Wallace's former players who admitted he didn't mind heading east in search of the ultimate fitness, but insisted there was far more to the big man than running up and down hills. He said: "First and foremost I liked going through to Gullane because we would stop off at Jock's mum and dad's house, and it gave us a wee break before hitting Murder Hill. Seriously though, Gullane was just something that had to be done.

"When Willie Waddell came to Ibrox he was on my back at training for about a month. Push and run, push and run. Maybe I had been trying to be a Jim Baxter and he noticed that. I would knock the ball long and stand back and admire it – or nutmeg somebody – so there is no question that between the two of them, they shaped me into what I eventually became – a real nuisance! It soon became part of my game to get myself into the box and thankfully I managed to get a number of important goals that way."

Willie Mathieson was a regular at left back during Jock's first spell at Ibrox. He said: "I'm not surprised in the slightest at the success Jock achieved during his career. When he came in at first you just knew he was going to be a winner. He was very thorough and the training stepped up something terrible, if you pardon the pun.

"Murder Hill was aptly named. It wasn't about being quick. I mean, it was a hill, and not only did you have to run up it, but you often had to carry someone on your back. And if you started being sick he would give you a row and say, 'Come on, no feeding the seagulls here!' And off you went again. He would tell you that your heart would give in before your legs, and just to keep going."

Alex MacDonald was another of Wallace's former players who admitted he didn't mind heading east in search of the ultimate fitness, but insisted there was far more to the big man than running up and down hills. He said: "First and foremost I liked going through to Gullane because we would stop off at Jock's mum and dad's house, and it gave us a wee break before hitting Murder Hill. Seriously though, Gullane was just something that had to be done.

"When Willie Waddell came to Ibrox he was on my back at training for about a month. Push and run, push and run. Maybe I had been trying to be a Jim Baxter and he noticed that. I would knock the ball long and stand back and admire it – or nutmeg somebody – so there is no question that between the two of them, they shaped me into what I eventually became – a real nuisance! It soon became part of my game to get myself into the box and thankfully I managed to get a number of important goals that way."

Willie Mathieson was a regular at left back during Jock's first spell at Ibrox. He said: "I'm not surprised in the slightest at the success Jock achieved during his career. When he came in at first you just knew he was going to be a winner. He was very thorough and the training stepped up something terrible, if you pardon the pun.

"Murder Hill was aptly named. It wasn't about being quick. I mean, it was a hill, and not only did you have to run up it, but you often had to carry someone on your back. And if you started being sick he would give you a row and say, 'Come on, no feeding the seagulls here!' And off you went again. He would tell you that your heart would give in before your legs, and just to keep going."