

Hawick Balls

From the sweeties.net wiki

Hawick Balls are one of the Scottish Borders' own sweets: round, minty, buttery boiled sweets named after the town of Hawick. They owe much of their fame to one man, the rugby commentator Bill McLaren.

The town

Hawick is a market town in the Scottish Borders, in the historic county of Roxburghshire, where the Slitrig Water meets the River Teviot. It grew in the 18th and 19th centuries as a centre for textiles and knitwear. Each year it holds the Common Riding, which combines riding the boundaries of the town's common land with remembering a victory of local youths over an English raiding party in 1514.

Jessie McVittie and the nail

According to legend, Hawick Balls were first made in the town in the 1850s by a woman called Jessie McVittie. She is said to have pulled her boiled sugar by hanging it over a nail and letting gravity stretch it out.

How they are made today

Today Hawick Balls are made in open copper pans, which caramelise the sugar, with oil of peppermint giving the minty flavour. The result is a boiled sweet that is both minty and buttery. They are now made by Golden Casket, a confectionery firm based in Greenock, which sells them as Hill's Hawick Balls and says the original recipe is still used.

Bill McLaren

Bill McLaren, the rugby commentator, came from Hawick and loved his home town. He was never without a poke of Hawick Balls, poke being the Scots word for a paper bag, and he used them to start conversations, draw out information and pick up gossip. Thanks to him, a small town sweet became known to rugby fans far beyond the Borders.

Other Scottish sweets

Hawick Balls sit alongside a group of traditional sweets from southern Scotland, including the soor plooms of Galashiels, Jethart snails from Jedburgh, and Moffat toffee: see [soor plooms](#) and [Moffat toffee](#). For another Scottish sweet, see [Scottish tablet](#).

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