

Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

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Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Hello...

I won't dwell on last season. Other contributors give their thoughts and opinions elsewhere in this issue which is again sponsored by Houndwood Crematorium with continued support from 24-7 Safety of Berwick. The backing of both is very much appreciated and helps allay the costs of producing what we hope readers will find makes interesting and perhaps, in places, provocative reading.

This issue also includes a Berwick Rangers' fixture list for 2015-16. As last year, we are also producing an A4 size hard copy fixture calendar. If any Trust member would like one for home or work, please let us know and we will send it to you. They should also be obtainable from the club shop on matchdays but the calendars are subject to availability as we have opted for a limited edition this time.

The pre-season games are over now. Overall, the attendances at the four home games were decent enough save for the Monday night draw with Dunfermline which attracted barely 190 people. But there was a crowd of 535 for the visit of North Shields (another draw), 433 against Kilmarnock (a game we were unlucky to lose) and 1080 for the midweek match against Hibs in which we were convincingly outplayed.

There are arguments for and against playing lots of pre-season fixtures but this year, they may have come as relief to those Berwick fans who were starting to fret over the lack of

signings. True, many of the men in the friendlies appeared as trialists but a good number have since signed. There was a mini controversy over the Trust naming trialists whose names had already appeared on the club-produced teamsheet. With all the technology now available and given that the world of Scottish football is really quite small, it is hardly likely that names, once released, will stay within the confines of the ground.

Now the big news. The football club has accepted the Trust's offer to sponsor the home match v. Arbroath on Saturday, August 29th, kick off 3:00 p.m. on exactly the same terms as those for the sponsored game v. Peterhead at the end of 2013. We will donate to the club the anticipated gate takings plus a further £1,000 (total=£2,200) in return for spectators being admitted free. We will again take a bucket collection with the Trust determining how proceeds will be used to help the club. So tell your friends about it as we look to attract a bumper attendance against one of last season's top four sides.

Michael

Michael Smyth,
Chairman

ISLA B - STITCHING TIME



ALL TYPES OF SEWING AND ALTERATIONS UNDERTAKEN
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FOOT NOTE:

If you have an questions or issues, or any contributions for our newsletter, email: trust@berwickrangers.org

So here we go again. It is the time of year when supporters are at their most optimistic and upbeat about their team's prospects for the forthcoming season. Except this year, most Berwick fans are less optimistic about the team's prospects and indeed expectations are probably lower than they have been for several seasons. The reasons for the pessimism are Rangers' dire league campaign last season which saw them flirt dangerously with the relegation play off before eventually finishing in an extremely disappointing eighth place, a lack of confidence amongst supporters in the manager, the decision to offer the vast majority of last season's under performers a new contract and the total lack of any activity on the signing front at all whilst other clubs were proactive and seemed to have stolen a march on us. As I write this, things have moved on and a number of new faces have been recruited to hopefully strengthen the squad to replace those who have decided to take up offers elsewhere. It will therefore effectively be a new look Rangers side which takes to the field for the first competitive match of the season but more of that later.

Last year at this time hopes were high that Rangers would not only challenge for a promotion play off place but also the title itself. There was talk amongst supporters that we had the most talented squad since the title winning side of 2006/2007. Unfortunately, these comparisons were well wide of the mark with last season's side failing to achieve any consistency at all and the hopes of a title challenge had evaporated even before the clocks went back at the end of October. By the time Christmas came round, the top three of Arbroath, Albion Rovers and Queen's Park had opened up a twenty point gap over the rest and such was that gap that even a second half of the season collapse by Arbroath where they managed just one win in 15 games at one point failed to prevent them from finishing in a play off place. Whilst Rangers did find some form over the festive period, which saw them occupying fourth place



in early January, they failed to kick on from there and in truth the fourth and last play off place always looked as if it was going to be a step too far. The most disappointing and annoying thing about this was that when the side were good, they were very good. Unfortunately, they more often than not would follow up a good performance with an absolute shocker. Unfortunately, the good performances were outweighed by the shockers which eventually saw the club finish in a lowly eighth position.

In my mid season review in the last newsletter, I made reference to Rangers having a 7 game winless run during the early part of the season which saw them pick up 4 points from a possible 21. They managed to have a similar run in January and February where only one win was achieved in 8 games and which saw only 5 points picked up from a possible 24. When you add these two periods together that is one win in 15 games with 9 points being picked up from a possible 45. That is just 3 games short from being half a season and is bottom of the table form and contributed significantly to Rangers' disappointing final league position.

The one bright spot from what was a dismal season was a cup run which saw Rangers reach the quarter finals of the Scottish Cup for the first time since 1980. Admittedly, Rangers benefitted from being drawn against 2 non league clubs and two clubs from their own league and they also enjoyed some cup luck along the way such as the extremely debatable penalty award at East Fife and both Albion Rovers and then Spartans hitting the bar late on in the replays of each of the ties against them but all sides need some luck to progress in the cup. As in 1980, Rangers' run came to an end against Hibs at Easter Road. On this occasion, a quick one two by Hibs mid way through the first half extinguished any hopes Rangers had of pulling off a shock and two second half goals added some further gloss to the final score for the home side.

What will the new season hold? As alluded to earlier, most fans have spent large parts of the close season in a pessimistic mood. That gloom has lifted slightly during the last couple of weeks or so with the addition to the squad of some new recruits, some of whom by all accounts have shown up well and shown some promise in the recent pre-season friendlies. I personally think that the time has come for a considerable injection of new blood into the team. Apart from 2012/2013, we have consistently failed to finish in the top 4 since we were relegated at the end of the 2006/2007 season. Hopefully, the influx of new faces when mixed with those retained from last season will provide the right ingredients for a sustained challenge, if not for the title, then at the very least the top 4. Is the new squad capable of achieving that? Only time will tell, but I think we as fans are entitled to expect a sustained challenge and it could be argued that whilst the current football club board have achieved a lot of good things, the one thing they have failed to deliver is a team on the pitch which is capable of taking the club to the next level. Rangers open up the competitive season with two cup ties against

championship opposition, St.Mirren in the Petrofac Training Cup and Alloa in the League Cup. In all honesty, if Rangers take anything out of these two games it will be a bonus before the league season kicks off with a home game against Montrose on 8th August. We are likely to have more of an idea of how we might fare in the forthcoming season at 4.45pm that afternoon.

On the subject of the football club board, the chairman stated at the end of last season that it is all about the fans and without the fans the club are nothing. On that basis it is disappointing that the FC board decided to leave the match day admission price at £12. As I understand it, match day receipts form a very small percentage of the club's overall revenue and I would have thought that the opportunity was there for them to acknowledge the fans' support during the last few barren seasons by reducing the admission prices even if it was only back down to £10. I am sure that the £12 admission charge does put some people off and as you will have read elsewhere in this newsletter, the Trust will be sponsoring the home game against Arbroath on 29th August when as a result, fans will be asked to pay what they can afford. It will be interesting to see what the attendance is that day but I for one will not be surprised if it is considerably above average.



CLOSE CONTEST FOR PLAYER OF THE YEAR

By a margin of just six votes, Steven Notman was chosen as Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust 'Player of the Year', 2014-15. Stevie was the early front runner but as more votes came in, Jonny Fairbairn emerged as a strong challenger. There was also good support for Paul Willis. A number of members dithered over whether to go for Notman or Fairbairn, their eventual choice of the latter partly influenced by the fact that Notman ceased playing because of injury following the match at Montrose on March 21st. Jonny eventually came second in the poll.

It was also the case that in a disappointing season, some members found it difficult to nominate a suitable candidate for the award. One even went for on-loan Kyle Wilkie (who made his debut in that match at Montrose) as a 'protest vote' to underline his disillusion with the overall performances of the established regulars.

Fittingly for a football club, a total of eleven different players received at least one nomination though Devon Jacobs was the only other one to do so in decent numbers.

Of course, many Trust members living further afield rarely, if ever, get the chance to see Berwick play. As a consequence, they do not participate in the poll. Yet, some will undoubtedly regularly read accounts of matches. In theory, there is no reason why, based on these, they could not cast a vote for 'Player of the Year'.

However, in a separate article in this issue, we take a closer look at some of the shortcomings concerning media reporting of Berwick Rangers' games.



As it was, exactly one third of Trust members did vote this time. Thanks to them and once again to Shoe Care of Berwick for supporting the award.

'Notty', who was also the winner in 2011-12, was presented with his shield by Trust secretary Isla Barber during the end of season awards gathering in the Jeff Burnlees Suite at Shielfield following the last home game against East Fife on April 25th.

We return to a theme covered almost three years ago in Issue 21, only this time, to look specifically at the reporting of Berwick Rangers' affairs and, in particular, first team matches.

There is certainly some dissatisfaction with the way the local papers, 'The Berwick Advertiser' and 'Berwickshire News' (some of whose sports pages are identical) cover the club. Berwick Rangers may be a small outfit but in the winter season, they remain the biggest thing in local sport. Without them, these publications would struggle to fill those back pages. Ostensibly, the club continues to receive a fair amount of copy and of course, now, much of it is also available on the titles' websites. The problem is the quality.

To start with reports of away games. It is no secret that the journalist to whom they are usually credited hardly ever sees Berwick play away from home. Are they then written by someone else in his name? This seems unlikely as the style of writing in these is very similar to that of reports of home games which he does attend. Yet Johnston Press, who own the papers, have titles all over the place. Surely, in some cases, a reporter from a sister paper in whose area the game is played could supply an eye witness account? This rarely seems to happen now.

Presumably, the contents of the away reports are cobbled together from sources such as other newspapers and accounts on opponents' websites. However, some sources are next to useless in this respect. For example, 'The Sunday Post's' coverage of SPFL 2 games is now at barebones level, little more than a brief summary of goals scored and the odd near miss. The BBC's Scottish Football website is just as threadbare. Not surprisingly, other club's internet offerings tend to be written from the perspective of those clubs.

Taking the information from elsewhere can lead

to the omission of key points. To give but one example, Arbroath's last goal in their 5-0 rout of Berwick in the final game of the season was an unusual one to say the least. A long punt by Richard Little from inside his own half bounced over the head of keeper Michael Andrews, well off his line, and into the net. There was no description whatsoever of this oddity in the local papers' report. Was this to avoid criticism of the goalie or to spare him embarrassment? More likely that, because he wasn't there, the writer was unaware of how this goal came about.

In fact, Michael needn't have worried for these days there is never criticism of individual players. Nor indeed, is there any praise. What we get instead, home and away, is a dull, formulaic piece, devoid of any humour, listing in chronological order the attempts on goal (from both sides) whether successful or not. There is no analysis of why things went badly or well and as for controversial incidents, forget it.

This is not to advocate brutal slagging off or the paying of over the top tributes to particular players dependent on performance. Most professional footballers should be realistic enough to judge their own contributions to games. If a Berwick player has a very good game, he deserves a commendation in print. If the opposite occurs, well, there are many ways in which a good journalist could describe his play without going overboard or writing anything that might undermine a player's self confidence.

Much of the other news in the local journals appears to come straight from the official club website. Thus for some people, it is not news at all as they have already read it online. Why not occasionally use one of these as a springboard to dig deeper and put an individual stamp on it? That, plus more exciting match reports might entice a few more people to matches.



SUPPORTERS' VIEWS

By Michael Smyth



Dear Supporters Trust,

It's with great sadness that I write today.

I have cancelled my membership with the supporters trust, I would be grateful if you could forward my apologies.

The reasoning is as follows:

I have followed Berwick Rangers all my life, and I can honestly say that I have never been more disheartened than now. I have seen the club locked out of the ground on the brink of closure, and more recently the exploits of Messrs Renwick and McGonigal.

However when our current manager took over, I thought now we kick off! However we finished this season with a whimper, save for Montrose and East Sirlingshire we would be finding ourselves in the Lowland League this coming season.

Players who have embarrassed and done nothing are rewarded with forthcoming contracts and they have the brass neck to mull it over in the chance of a better offer. Whilst players who have actually been worthy of a contract have left or told no thanks.

The club only supply information when there seems a mass riot in the offing!!

I can see no improvement for the coming season, therefore I feel that I can express my displeasure by cancelling my subscription.

I wish the Trust all the best and truly applaud their work for the club. I only wish the club acknowledged this in return.

Yours sincerely,
John Nicholls (Ex 172)

We replied to John, pointing out that it was not the fault of the Trust that it had been such a disappointing campaign. We did our bit, for example by providing funds for decent training facilities. However, despite commending our efforts on behalf of the football club, John felt that resigning from the Trust was the most effective way he could express his dissatisfaction with performances on the field.

We decided to solicit the opinions of some other Trust members....

Dear Supporters Trust.

I think the one (printable and not X rated) word to sum up last season is frustration -frustration that we made distinctly average opposition look good frustration that we couldn't kill off teams when we were in control of games frustration that some of our excellent lead up play seemed to die in the final third of the pitch frustration that too many of our best players suffered collective off days

I viewed the start of the season with genuine optimism. The new signings and returnees looked impressive in the early games but yet again this proved to be a false dawn, in too many games we looked short of ideas and lacked the ability to dominate games. It's no good thumping 'Shire 5-0 in one home game then drawing the next three.

My emigration to Yorkshire in the New Year meant I only saw a handful of home games after that. The cup exit at Easter Road was a blessed relief given our abysmal league form in the run up and for a short time after it looked like a play off push was on again. But disappointment reared its head again and too often leaving Shielfield was accompanied by a sense of frustration (that word again), disappointment and at times down right anger (the car crash

draw against Clyde and the defeat to East Fife spring to mind), the three hour drive back south being as enjoyable as a heavy defeat to Cowdenbeath. We were surely a much better team than our final position among the also-rans suggested.

As for next season, damn right Mr Chairman, a repeat of the last is unacceptable. Was it a mistake to offer the manager a new contract in the middle of the season ? Some of his signings have to be questioned (Dargo) and his lack of a Plan B at times was obvious. But there are again reasons to be optimistic. At times he had us playing some sparkling football and with Jonny Fairbairn improving all the time, a hopefully fully fit Stevie Notman, Henderson & Drummond signing on again and the potential of the new signings, the play offs should be the minimum aim. Sad to see Paul Willis leave and Ross Gray released though.

I just hope I'm not typing an almost identical reflection this time next year.

Yours,
Andrew Hay

An email came in from Alex Matthews...

Last season for me proved to be a damp squib. We started the campaign full of hope and anticipation - with Cameron in his first full season in charge and with the likes of Lavery and Lee Currie retained - I really thought we were going to challenge.

Unfortunately that couldn't have been further from the truth. The team were consistently inconsistent and despite a few eye catching performances and results (the last being away at East Fife) we never looked like we could grind out a series of results to reach, at least, the play-offs. Injuries came at the wrong time, some

players just didn't perform at the level they did the season before and we badly needed another proven striker to bolster the squad.

Whilst it was tremendous to get to the Quarter Final of the Cup (and have the atmosphere of the Spartans replay on the way), the season can only be regarded as a disappointment. I believe the Chairman has already stated we 'must do better' next term. Too true!

Cheers,
Alex

Philip Rogers commented...

Last season was at times frustrating but overall for me it was positive. We had a strong squad that should have done better in the league. Having said that, we were still in the hunt for the play offs up until our last home game. The cup run was superb and has left the club in a sound financial position. Notman was a big miss at the tail/business end of the season and we were always vulnerable down our own right. Also, our goalkeeping and defending was at times rather feeble. However, we also played some superb entertaining stuff. There is not much between the teams in this division and with a couple of decent signings I am hopeful that we will challenge for the title. If we are going to splash the cash a little then I would like to see a quality keeper, a vocal leader in midfield and a consistent striker. Has anyone spoken to Liam Craig!!!

I did agree with all the players that were released and although Robbie Horn will be a miss at least CC can bring in his own man. Having had 18 months at the club I think that the fans' expectations of CC will be defined in the coming season.

Philip



BERWICK PLAYER IN UNDER 19 INTERNATIONAL

Berwick Rangers can partly lay claim to producing an international player. Loick Mangala, one of the Edusport Academy boys who played for the Development team last season, represented the Democratic Republic of Congo against France in an under 19 international in Toulouse on June 23rd.

As he was still shrugging off the effects of an injury, Loick had no chance of starting the match but he came on as a substitute and played the final twenty minutes or so. France won 2-0 but despite being on the losing side, Loick was happy with his performance and so was his coach.

The DRC squad was made up of players based in Europe, mainly in France, Belgium and Germany. Loick was the only member who had been playing in Scotland. The match versus France took place during a three day training session for the Congolese boys in the southern French city.

Although born in France himself in Ris-Orangis near Paris, Loick (left, in front) qualifies for the DRC as both his parents were born there. He said he was very proud to wear the national colours. The DRC under 19s are due to play Belgium in September and he hopes to be invited to join the squad for that match, too. Looking further ahead, Loick would be eligible for the national squad for the African Nations Under 21 Cup to be held in Zambia in 2017 and there is also the Under 21 World Cup in South Korea. Meanwhile, after playing with Berwick on amateur forms, he is hoping to get fixed up as a professional with a club in either France or Belgium for 2015-16.



Allistair Grieve, who is a member of Berwick Rangers Supporters Club as well as of the Trust, was the winner of the Josser Johnson Memorial Trophy for 2014-15. The trophy was presented to the Supporters Club some years ago by Josser's family and is awarded each season to an individual supporter in recognition of their work on behalf of the football club.

Allistair began helping out at Shielfield during the 2001-02 season, mainly working in the club shop alongside current Trust vice chairman Gordon Dickson. He then moved on to assisting David Spence to sell programmes and also helped kit man 'Pee' Oliver with his post match duties.

It was around ten years ago that Allistair moved from programmes to operating a turnstile, a task he continues to perform today.

He is also a member of a small group who keep the club's social media outlets...Facebook, Twitter, official website and mobile phone app...up to date. An extension of this is his keeping fans unable to make the game, but who have access to the appropriate technology, informed of how the match is going.

For good measure, Ali also helps organise supporters buses to selected away games.

The trophy was presented to him by Supporters Club chairman and club director Bill Parkin at the penultimate home match of the season versus Clyde on April 11th.

Well done, Allistair!

Although five out of their six victories in 24 matches came in the second half of the season, Berwick Rangers' Development team's programme ended the same way as it began with defeat to Cowdenbeath. Despite Forfar having already wrapped up the title, understandably, the SPFL insisted that clubs fulfil all outstanding fixtures. This led to Berwick cramming in four matches inside ten days at the end of April and the first week of May.

The results of those four games highlighted the vagaries of the Development League. In the first, Berwick scored the most goals by any team in a single match, hitting ten against two in reply against bottom of the table Stenhousemuir on the artificial pitch at Whittingehame Drive in Haddington. Two nights later, they lost 7-1 to Alloa at Shielfield. It was something of a surprise then, though thoroughly deserved, when they beat the young Wasps 2-1 at their own Indodrill Stadium. Alloa's failure to take a point from that game eventually cost them runners up spot in the final table. That went to Cowdenbeath whose cause was boosted by a 5-1 win as Berwick wound up their campaign at Central Park. In their own final game, the Blue Brazil's 3-3 draw versus Livingston secured the point they needed to claim second place.

The way Berwick's team operated was in marked contrast to some other clubs. For example, Stirling Albion, Forfar, Cowdenbeath and Alloa have well established youth set ups, a fact reflected in their fielding settled teams with few if any overlap players. Luckily for Berwick, the SPFL relaxed its early season rule restricting the use of trialists as it proved a nightmare to police. This enabled Rangers to field many over the course of the season. Some made just one or two appearances, others more though not necessarily in blocks of fixtures at particular stages of the campaign. For instance, Charlie Denton featured early on, came back briefly in



the middle and was a regular at the end though still unsigned, being one of ten unregistered players in the squad for the last match.

No one could accuse these lads of a lack of commitment or application and most of them provided sufficient evidence to suggest why the club had offered them trials. As John Bell, club director responsible for youth development has pointed out, the main aim was to get accustomed to the Development League as opposed to the previous season's Reserve League. He believes it is important that in 2015-16, the team has a more settled look based on a regular squad of around ten which would still leave scope for trialists and/or first teamers needing match practice. Last season's better results tended to come when there were a few of the latter in the side aiding the younger players' development which, of course, is the main purpose of the league. Results should really be of secondary importance.

Euan Bauld came closest to making a breakthrough into the first team. He was

unlucky to make his first senior start in a very disappointing 2-0 home defeat to Albion Rovers and when his next chance came away to East Stirling in April, was forced to leave the field in the first half with a back injury. After Billy Bald broke his wrist and the recall of on-loan Jamie Wilson to Dunfermline, keeper Nils Bleakley was on the bench for the remaining SPFL 2 games but was never called into action.

Other signed second teamers included the French boys from Edusport Academy, Zak Khouiel, Anthony Monin, Matthieu Judor and, after he turned eighteen, Loick Mangala. Unfortunately, in one way or another, they never fully adapted to the pace of the Development League, clearly familiar with a style play which allowed more time on the ball and space to stroke it about. A later arrival from the same source, Maxim Veyreinc, was the exception but he was still listed as a trialist right to the end. All the same, without the French connection, Berwick might have been struggling for numbers. They gained publicity for the club and seemed to enjoy being part of it. Merci, messieurs!

The coming season may see a reduction in the number of games, teams playing each other twice instead of thrice meaning matches roughly once a fortnight. This should avoid the late rush of games caused by earlier postponements due to the winter weather. It would also allow scope for a properly designated play off between the champions of Development Leagues East and West. Last time round, neither Forfar nor Airdrie (West winners) were interested even though the SPFL was keen on the idea.

VITAL STATISTICS

1. Berwick finished 8th of nine teams averaging precisely a point per game. These came from six wins and six draws.
2. Their 42 goals were shared by 21 players. Trialist Daniel Watt was the leading scorer with six, three of them in the 10-2 win over Stenhousemuir.
3. Six of Berwick's goals total came from the spot. That these penalties were netted by five different players was indicative of the regular changes to the team.



Trust Board member Stuart Lee recounts his early days as a Berwick Rangers supporter.

The recent sad passing of Tommy McQueen made me think, 'We could have done with him last season, or maybe Gary O'Connor or Neil Young.' They are my choices as the best three keepers to have played for us. However, I digress. I should be talking about my early days as a fan of the 'Dream Team'.

Strangely enough, I started life as a Gateshead fan. In those days, they were still a Football League team, in the 3rd Division (North). I can remember Tommy Ingham and the Callender brothers playing for them. I then changed my allegiance to B.R.F.C. When and how, I don't know. However, I eventually got my dad to take me to 'Old Shielfield' to see them.

I believe my first game was a 5-1 or 5-0 win against a team in red. It may have been Stirling Albion. It was the only 'C' Division game I saw with a crowd of 2-2,500. I had been at my dad before this to take me to Ibrox (60,000 crowd). He didn't so I suppose this was his way of making amends. Before that game, Berwick had beaten two big teams in the Cup. Dundee, with two Scottish internationals in the side, were the bigger scalp so we were 'giant killers' long before 1967.

Soon, my father was taking me regularly to 'New Shielfield' complete with 'wriggly tin' perimeter fence. My week's pocket money got me into the ground and transfer to the stand--that's after walking all the way round to get in where the speedway pits are now. I think it was 1/- or 1/6 (5p or 7 and a half pence) but I didn't care. I was watching my team. The programme was 3d for eight pages. Not a lot of reading though.

I certainly remember the standard of football.



Ken Bowron

The Second Division had a lot of players who had played for clubs in the upper league. This seemed to 'equalise' the bottom half of the top league and the top half of ours. We watched each match on packed gravel in the bottom half of the stand. No seats then. Dad took an old paper to sit on. A few years later, wooden slats were installed and eventually, concrete terracing and seats. I prefer to stand, always have done.

The crowds were always good, 2,000+. Imagine that today. Buses from places such as Duns, Coldstream, Eyemouth, Belford and Wooler brought fans to the games and took them home afterwards. Crowds eventually dropped but were still above today's average. Even when we went 10 months without a win over the 1956-7 and 1957-8 seasons, they were still reasonable.

We had some good players in those days to match the crowds. I remember Alistair Campbell, Charlie Beecham....who pulled down an opponent's shorts on the touchline in front of the stand!...Jock Wallace, Alan Bartle, Ken Prior, Eric Addison, John Rugg, Alan Runciman, Gordon Thom, Adam Imrie and more. The aforementioned Tommy McQueen was a

character. He was boss of his penalty area, not just his six yard area. Picture the scene; "I said, goalie's ball, now get oot ma way" was his message to any defender who dared get in his road. He scored from the spot in one game. He hit the ball so hard the East Fife goalie never moved. We could have done with a leader like Tommy on the park last season.

I don't know if anyone can remember Eric Addison scoring six against Dundee United once. They played in black and white hoops in those days. I would say the best player I ever saw in black and gold was Bobby Mitchell who came to us straight from 'The Toon' with three Cup winners medals. Although getting on a bit, he was still class. On his debut, about two thousand Geordies came up to see him score against Hamilton Accies after waiting for the wind to die down before taking his free kick. I think it went in off the post. Good times, good memories.

Alas, it didn't last long, mother red-carded me, told me to seek my fortune elsewhere. So aged fifteen and a half, I joined the Army to see the world. January 10th, 1961, I landed at the Army Apprentice School on the Welsh border near Chepstow. 'God, what awaits me here?,' I thought. A rude awakening for a start. March here, polish this, clean that, learn a trade at the same time. Salvation came on the sports



Jock Wallace



Bobby Mitchell

field and in the gym. I found something that I liked and that I was good at. Physical Training. I should have been a P.T. Instructor instead of a fitter.

Being there, meant I got to see Newport County a couple of times and also Newcastle and Sunderland at Ninian Park in Cardiff. Dad kept me in touch with the 'Black and Gold' by sending me 'The Berwick Journal' and later, the 'Advertiser' each week. It wasn't the same but it kept me going in between periods of leave. Fortunately, I saw them a fair few times whilst on leave but I had resigned myself to being a long distance supporter.

One particular game I remember when I was back was on a Wednesday night. The team were also on the train I travelled on up to Cowdenbeath. We drew 1-1. Ken Bowron scored the equaliser. By now, there was concrete terracing on the 'Docket' side at Shielfield which was an improvement. Some of the scores then were amazing, 5-3, 1-6, 5-5, 3-6, 0-8, 4-5, 0-7, 2-6, 8-2.

After three years as an army apprentice, I was into the 'big' Army doing my basic training at Aldershot before being sent further afield with a posting to Germany.

NEW SURFACING

In April, the Trust contributed £1,000 towards the cost of re-surfacing the area near and beyond the main turnstiles inside Shielfield. This news attracted an above average number of 'likes' on our Facebook page along with several favourable comments.

The Supporters Club paid the remainder of the near £3,200 bill. Their vice chairman Arthur Herriot explained that the work was going to be done anyway but the Trust Board appreciated the invitation from the Supporters Club to contribute having previously made enquiries about the feasibility and potential cost of such work. In fact, it was done at a discount price.

Ball sponsors at Berwick's home game versus Montrose in January were the 'Low Fell Fusiliers', a stag party drawn from Yorkshire, County Durham and Newcastle who came to Shielfield in the guise of 'Dad's Army', even forming a guard of honour for the teams as they came out of the tunnel for the start of the game. One of the 'Fusiliers', who is in the road surfacing business, got talking to Supporters' Club officials and a deal was struck.

The Trust then made further enquiries about the possibility of improving the terrain immediately outside the same turnstiles. Whilst the Supporters Club holds the lease for the stadium and is responsible for maintenance within, it can do little in the way of alterations and improvements outside as this land comes directly under the control of Northumberland County Council.

Our payment towards the re-surfacing brought the total amount of direct Trust financial support to the football club last season to close on £7,500.

Above, Brian Parkin (right) accepts our 're-surfacing' cheque on behalf of B.R.S.C.



INTERNATIONAL AT SHIELFIELD

For the second year in a row, Shielfield hosted a Scotland v. England football international in the month of April. In 2014, teams representing the independent schools of the two countries met in Berwick, England winning 4-0. This year, it was the turn of the nations' Fire Service teams. England again emerged as winners, both goals in a 2-0 success coming in the first half.

WHAT? NO SPONSOR?

Not so much a news item, more a thought. It has been hard enough for the SPFL to obtain a sponsor for its four divisions but it's a pity that none has yet emerged for the Development Leagues East and West. Even if a firm donated a relatively small sum to help each of the SPFL lower division clubs who operate teams in these with their running costs, it would surely benefit from being associated with a competition which helps to bring on young players.

Furthermore, the quality of the games is generally good. They may be small in number, but the regulars at Berwick's home DL games keep coming back because they like what they see. A few have even been heard to say they get more satisfaction watching the enthusiasm prevalent in Development League games than watching first team matches.



THANKS, BILLY

Goalkeeper Billy Bald's season came to a premature end when he broke his wrist early on in the match against Annan Athletic at Shielfield on March 14th. Soon afterwards, Billy told the club to terminate his contract which meant it wouldn't be paying him until the end of a season in which he would be unable to take any further part. A terrific gesture in an era when we hear so much about the financial demands of footballers.

It was good to see Billy back at Shielfield for the end of season presentations. With increased responsibilities in his job as a surveyor, he foresaw difficulties in resuming a SPFL career and has returned to the Junior ranks with Bonnyrigg Rose now managed by former Berwick player and assistant manager Robbie Horn.

PHOTOGRAPHS

We are always on the lookout for photographs to accompany match reports and other stories on our website and in this publication so a big thank you to all those who helped in this respect over the course of last season.

Amongst them, locally, Alan Bell has always been very helpful. Trust member Kevin McCormick, who lives in Glasgow, provided a large batch taken at the Easter Road cup tie against Hibs. Others last term included Kisaki Makuwa from the Congolese F.A. who was at a Development League game at Shielfield to see dual French/D.R.C. national Loick Mangala in action. Up at Forthbank Astro, Graeme Rogers, who runs rogerthat productions, was videoing the Stirling Albion v. Berwick game in the same competition on behalf of Albion's Greg Hurst and, with Greg's agreement, was able to supply some stills from the match.

Finally, a special mention of Alloa Athletic's official cameraman David Glencross. Asked if we could have a couple of shots from Berwick's 2-1 DL win over Alloa in Clackmannanshire, he initially sent around two dozen quality pictures and a day later, directed us to his Flickr portfolio where there were many others!

DUMFRIES YMCA

In our previous edition, we featured struggling Dumfries YMCA, Scotland's worst senior team. They duly finished bottom of the South of Scotland League failing to win a single game but avoided the embarrassment of finishing pointless thanks to a 2-all draw away to Nithsdale Wanderers in Sanquhar in March. Nithsdale finished 13th in the final table, one place above the YMCA but 21 points ahead of them. Undeterred, Dumfries YMCA will play in the South League again this season.

TWEEDMOUTH RANGERS

We also featured local side Tweedmouth Rangers, now based at Old Shielfield. They finished third in the North Northumberland League First Division on goal difference behind AFC Wansbeck. Champions were Alnmouth United.



FIXTURES 2015/16

DATE	COMP	OPPOSITION	RESULT	SCORERS	ATT.
July 25th	PTC 1	St. Mirren			
Aug. 1st	LC 1	ALLOA ATHLETIC			
Aug. 8th		MONTROSE			
Aug. 15th		East Fife			
Aug. 18th/19th*	PTC2				
Aug. 22nd		Stirling Albion			
Aug. 25th/26th*	LC 2				
Aug. 29th		ARBROATH			
Sept. 5th		QUEEN'S PARK			
Sept. 12th		Elgin City			
Sept. 19th		ANNAN ATHLETIC			
Sept. 22nd/23rd*	LC 3				
Sept. 26th		Clyde			
Oct. 3rd		EAST STIRLINGSHIRE			
Oct. 10th	PTC 3				
Oct. 17th		EAST FIFE			
Oct. 24th	SC 2				
Oct. 27th/28th*	LC 4				
Oct. 31st		Montrose			
Nov. 7th		STIRLING ALBION			
Nov. 14th		Annan Athletic			
Nov. 21st		CLYDE			
Nov. 28th	SC 3				
Dec. 5th		Arbroath			
Dec. 12th		ELGIN CITY			
Dec. 19th		East Stirlingshire			
Dec. 26th		Queen's Park			
Jan. 2nd		ANNAN ATHLETIC			
Jan. 9th	SC 4 or	East Fife			
Jan. 16th		ARBROATH			
Jan. 23rd		Elgin City			
Jan. 30th		QUEEN'S PARK			
Feb. 6th	SC 5 or	EAST STIRLINGSHIRE			
Feb. 13th		Stirling Albion			
Feb. 20th		Clyde			
Feb. 27th		MONTROSE			
Mar. 5th	SC 6 or	Queen's Park			
Mar. 12th		STIRLING ALBION			
Mar. 19th		Annan Athletic			
Mar. 26th		ELGIN CITY			
Apr. 2nd		East Stirlingshire			
Apr. 9th		CLYDE			
Apr. 16th		Arbroath			
Apr. 23rd		EAST FIFE			
Apr. 30th		Montrose			
May		PLAY-OFFS			

All matches are scheduled for Saturdays unless marked*. Home games in capitals.
 PTC=Petrofac Training Cup LC=League Cup SC=William Hill Scottish Cup

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