

BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS TRUST



A Time for Change

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New Decade | New Goals | New Berwick Rangers

Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

Magazine No. 37
June 2021

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN...



Even during a global pandemic, in a time when the world has stood still for long periods, life at Berwick Rangers has been far from dull. There was of course the small matter of a supporters and shareholder engagement

The Trust participated in. This culminated in a Zoom with all fans invited, to finalise The Club's view on allowing two teams of aspiring 17 to 20-year-olds to compete for one season in the Lowland League, to give these youngsters a uniquely challenging environment to help their development, as intra-colts' competition has failed in that objective.

Oddly, given the alleged strength and depth of supposed negative feeling on social media, from perspective of a supporter's trust devoted to ensuring fans voices are heard (and something I do personally on The Club Board) the number of people who actually stepped from behind their keyboards to attend was exceptionally low indeed and extremely disappointing.

Equally my face-to-face conversations on the subject have been mutually informed, thoughtful, balanced and ultimately agreeing that as it harms no-one, has no ties to subsequent participation and gives us (at the very least) two more games of hospitality profit; why not? That compared to most of the social media output which has been largely

ill-informed (of the facts) and appeared to me to be biased against the clubs of these young players; opinion formed looking back at personal versions of history, rather than considering the opportunity ahead. We will see however, as the exercise will provide demonstrable sports science stats on its success or otherwise in this data driven world. Had it not been for the Supporters Club's excellent factual vote from their members (in favour), I may have voted no, as my position is to follow supporter opinion and trend (and based on clearly flawed social media anecdote). I'm glad the club acted in the way they did; much credit to them for doing so.

That 'the voice of the fan' is a viable force for change is another fascinating concept. The introduction of the idea of a European Super League having been so brief after supporter outcry would also suggest some sway from fans and is discussed wonderfully well in the article from Jolyon Shotton, a new member of the Trust and previously of Tottenham Hotspurs Supporters Trust.

Another new Trust member, Phil Lockwood through whom The Trust has new reach, having given us a toehold in Guernsey, has a compelling story of how the love of football has led to a life-long love affair with our club from unusual beginnings for him, and hopefully now his son. Phil and I are quite exercised by the thought of a BRFC pre-season trip to his island; watch this space!!

Talking of new toeholds, I'm delighted to welcome another new member, Jeffrey Roy, to The Trust Board. Jeffrey is also a shareholder and will be proudly wearing the new shirts he's bought in Nova Scotia! More from our new Canadian Berwick Rangers Supporters section in future editions, I hope. Welcome Jeffrey!

I'm also indebted to Lewis Barr for writing a lovely article for us, which I know you will enjoy as much as I did. Thanks Lewy!

My eternal thanks also to David Letham

for his passionate support to entertain you through his articles for this edition and thanks also to the always brilliant contributions from Ron Kirk and the inimitable Stuart Bell. All sincere and though-provoking articles. Thank you gentlemen.

Moving briefly to the support The Trust has given to The Club in this half year, we've given a significant fund to the fantastic Club 1881 effort and look forward to the fruits of that excellent initiative. We've also made funds available once again to the pursuit of new player talent and pledged further support to our new manager; the anticipation of that is quite palpable!

I hope you agree that recapturing Ryan Finnie from under the noses of SPFL clubs gives a great message and, retaining the experience and passion of Calum Smith alongside the experienced Jamie Pyper really does give that desirable mix of experience with the exciting youth we have in the squad.

In closing, I'd like to thank Gordon Dickson, Isla Barber, David Letham, Ron Kirk, Joe Crawford, and the legend that is Dave Spence for your input and support during the board zoom meetings. It would also be most remiss of me not to say a huge thanks to Brian, Craig, Dave, Nathan, Gary and Dougie; The BRFC Club board whom I'm privileged to work with; along with another legend the one and only Dennis McCleary.

A final heart-felt word for Brian, our Football Club Chairman, whom I've always admired hugely for his unstinting passion to do everything he can for our club, and for his strong leadership when it was needed. May I say that my admiration is ten-fold at present, as he continues to lead The Club Board while battling through the pain of recent surgery and recuperation to remedy an acute back condition. A massive thank you Brian, from us all at The Trust.

Andrew Allan

Chairman, Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

CHRISTMAS IS COMING: SO IS THE EUROPEAN SUPER LEAGUE

by JOLYON SHOLTON

“Football is for the fans. It can be the greatest game in the world but if there are no people to watch, it becomes nothing. The fans are the lifeblood of the game.”

This is a sentiment that even the fractious stakeholders on both sides of the European Super League debate will agree on. However, I'm sure the fans Mr Stein spoke of were

loves their club more.

No, although undoubtedly 'the lifeblood of the game', I question if football is truly 'for the fans' anymore; or indeed if we, the fans, will influence the shape of our game for too much longer.

Fans, and their supporter organisations, by and large, firmly believe that they have the power; the veto. "If 'them upstairs' think they can do that, we'll vote with our feet, stage protests disrupt the AGM; they'll have to think again". Indeed, in recent times our own club board was removed by The Supporters Club due to their significant shareholding (130,000 of 420,000 shares) and consequent constitutional voting right at The Club AGM; perhaps a last vestige of true fan power, albeit; although undoubtedly ultimately positive for The Club, The Supporters Club held no member vote so one could question whether or not it was a truly representative fan-based action.

So perhaps fans do have the power to influence change right now; but, clubs where fans have significant shareholding aside, not for much longer. The winds of change are blowing round our terraces.

More recently, The Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust lobbied the owners, Joe Lewis (70.6% of 85% holding company) Daniel Levy (29.4% of 85% holding company) to replace the Executive Committee, who

sought to join the European Super League without fan consultation, with people chosen by the owners and The Trust. Given where the shareholder power sits at Spurs, it'll be an interesting litmus test of where the power lies in clubs all over the country. It's interesting to note that clubs from countries where there is governance in place to assure supporters groups have 'the golden share' for significant decisions affecting their club, none were involved in the ESL proposals.

In summary, fan power exists where we have a constitutional majority shareholding position, or some form of golden share through legal governance; but what about the thousands of clubs where that isn't the case? These winds of change are creeping up the beaufort scale.

My first insight into the concept that clicks on the turnstile are no longer of any great value, was an infamous visit to an almost empty 3G arena to watch Berwick play The Caledonian Braves, where those who did turn up had no programme, no loudspeaker announcements and no tangible welcome. A soulless cage as I regretfully described it, through my feeling that the fan experience had been a little overlooked. Further research revealed that the club model was predicated on the virtual fan, vicariously following their team, further fuelling my indignation and entrenching my view that this is an outrageous and sacrilegious outlier from how we fans, in person, should worship at the alter of the beautiful game.

My belief that the ESL is not just a possibility, but inevitable is based on the driver for change. Commerce; and commerce based on the market targeted by the timing of the announcement, peak US time. Equally, a number of the English clubs involved have American directors with ties to US sports club franchises.

It's following that logic into the dynamics of American Football franchise behaviour that



truly begins to start the bell tolling the demise of fan influence on major decisions in 'their' football club. History shows how the concept that clicks on the turnstile are no longer of any estimable value to the owners of these businesses. Not clubs; perhaps that's the difference. We see ourselves as part of a club, belonging to a large like-minded group. No these are businesses; franchises. Mobile entities which can operate anywhere with no consideration to the devout followers who wish to worship at the alter of the beautiful game.

American football franchises have moved not just between cities, but entire states, leaving fans behind them on around 20 occasions!

Some recent examples:-

- Houston Oilers moved to Nashville as Tennessee Titans 1998 (Texas to Tennessee)
- St Louis Rams moved to Los Angeles in 2016 (Missouri to California)
- Oakland Raiders moved to Las Vegas in 2020 (California to Nevada)

Yes these franchises do have full stadia, which unequivocally belies any belief that fans are important; but are fickle. How must the people of St Louis, who had loved their team and spent so much time and money supporting them felt when they just up and



the heaving throngs of passionate people watching fitba on the terraces of stadia all over the world; probably not the virtual singletons that watch on our myriad of mobile devices walking to the shops or chopping veg in the kitchen. To be clear however, I'm not passing comment on which incarnation fan is right or wrong, more or less important or even which

THIRD TIME LUCKY

by **RON KIRK**



left for LA? Did they vote with their feet, stage protests disrupt the AGM? Did it work? Equally, my how quickly the 'sports fans' of LA built a deep love (and develop deep pockets) for their new love?

The cornerstone of these franchises are wealth sponsors who are well represented on the many many TV advertising breaks, the TV revenue, franchised team and fanwear and, to some degree, matchday revenue. The latter being the least considered contributor.

Fans are the lifeblood of the game, but only through the millions of TV subscriptions fuelling the franchise system; the commercial desire for which is here to stay. It may well start with a UK Superleague; it may even reappear as a legally tested reincarnation of the recent model; but with sponsor, TV and football body stakeholders thoroughly and legally considered. Will that consultation and negotiation with stakeholder groups include fans? You decide.

Normally at this time of year my article for this newsletter reflects on the season just finished and considers Rangers prospects for the season ahead. However, these are not normal times. For the second season running we have had a season curtailed by another Covid lockdown. Rangers last kicked a competitive ball in the 0-3 home defeat to Stirling Albion in the Scottish Cup on Boxing Day. Subsequent scheduled games were postponed due to the weather before all football below Championship level in Scotland fell foul of another lockdown. Although Leagues 1 and 2 eventually resumed to complete a shortened 22 game season the decision was duly made to call it a day in the Lowland League with Kelty Hearts being declared Champions on a points per game basis. Rangers actually benefitted from this by climbing one place to tenth from the eleventh position they occupied at the time of the lockdown.

From a Lowland League point of view the major talking points occurred off the pitch. Firstly there was the debate about whether the relegation play off should take place with talk of League reconstruction being brought into the equation. Eventually the decision was made that the play off would take place which meant that Brechin City who had been cut adrift at the foot of League Two for a second season weren't saved this time and at the time of writing they will take on Kelty Hearts in an attempt to save their League Two status. In the play off semi final, Kelty cruised past Brora Rangers who had been declared Highland League Champions despite only playing 3 games. They were one of 5 clubs who had maximum points from their opening fixtures but their goal difference of 20 for and one against swung the title their way. To put

that into some context, I am old enough to remember the time in the 1970's when Carlisle United were top of the old First Division after winning their first three games. I somehow doubt that Carlisle would have been declared as the Champions of England if that season had been brought to an end after only 3 games for some reason. To be fair to Brora though they had been Highland Champions the season before and along with Kelty had been deprived of the opportunity to win promotion to the SPFL when the relegation play off was scrapped. In addition, they produced one of the results of the season when they knocked Hearts out of the Scottish Cup.

The real elephant in the room though was the recent controversial decision by a majority of Lowland League clubs to provisionally agree to admit colts teams from both Celtic and Rangers for the season ahead. Whilst this is still subject to ratification at the Lowland League AGM and Rangers continue to canvass the views of their fans it is fair to say that the initial decision to accept the colts teams from Scottish football's ugly sisters has not been universally well received. Much like the question of independence amongst the people of Scotland, opinions are largely divided. How successful this venture will be only time will tell which is presumably why the proposal is for one year only. One of the concerns about this proposal is that it is effectively blocking off the pyramid system for the clubs below such as those in the East of Scotland League. I did find it a tad ironic that the response was that these leagues had not played sufficient games to enable any of their clubs to be eligible to be promoted yet it was ok to award the Highland title to Brora after 3 games thus allowing them the opportunity to

win promotion to League Two. It is possible that there may be more mileage to go in this debate yet though before the decision to admit the colts teams is ratified.

Back on the pitch, whilst a number of last season's squad have been retained, noises have been made within the club about efforts being made to sign better quality players which will hopefully see Rangers competing for the places higher up the League. The acquisition of Scott Taylor-MacKenzie from Gala Fairydean looks on paper to be an astute signing. I can't say that I know anything about him but those that do seem

to rate him highly. Given that he found the net 8 times for Gala in 12 games when the Rangers squad as a whole only scored 12 goals from 13 games then hopefully he will provide the much needed goal threat from midfield which Rangers have been missing, With the vaccine rollout well under way and the lifting of restrictions progressing hopefully we will all be able to be back on the terraces at Shielfield for the start of the new season which will be Rangers third in the Lowland League. Hopefully this time it will be third time lucky and we will see a season through from start to finish.



STUART BELL'S VIEW FROM THE DUCKET

by **STUART BELL**

When the Lowland League fixtures came out I was really optimistic that we'd be allowed into Shielfield Park for the opener against Vale of Leithen on 10th October. Perhaps we'd have to stand in a part of the Ducket that hasn't seen footprints since Rangers were in town, but that would be no problem at all because I was buzzing with excitement to see the promising team that Yano had put together. We had signed a nice mix of youth and experience, wrapped it up in the Club's feel-good embrace and even - goodness me - signed a centre-half.

The virus, the politicians and the back-of-a-fag-packet Joint Response Group at the SFA, had other ideas. So, with little alternative, I put my faith in the Mr. Magoo live streaming link and tried to replicate a Saturday at Shielfield from my settee. I got up early and popped down to Redcar East train station to listen for announcements about points failures, waited half an hour in Greggs for a cheese pasty while some people did their weekly shop of fatty snacks, then went home to pretend I was in The Curfew by talking bollocks to my cat and queuing an age for my toilet every 25 minutes. Several bottles of unusual beer later, I was ready to press the 'go' button.

Now, I used to work in IT. Back in the 80's there were only 2 cures for all technology ills. The first still applies – switch it off, and switch it back on. The second was called the 1-inch drop, involving lifting up your computer by an inch (no easy feat as they weighed more than a washing machine back then) and dropping it back on the table. Nowadays, you are advised to insert a sabre-tooth dongle into the JAK port on your wizzboz then sit on the garage roof and point it towards Barnard Castle.

The streaming experience was disappointing to say the least – bordering on unwatchable in that first game. I remarked at the time that when we get back in the Ducket, I expect the centre-circle to be painted green and that our tech boys get it to spin round from time to time so that we can all have a cup of tea whilst the entire game buffers.

Meanwhile, back at the football..... well I was really disappointed in the early games to be honest. We huffed and puffed against Vale of Leithen and only won the game thanks to an Exocet free kick from Jordan Sinclair that got goal of the season out of the way early doors. I can group the Spartans away game with this one as the same problems were on display. The team was energetic and well organised in terms of positioning and that helps make our defence look better than it has for many, many years. But the passing was laboured, the first touch erratic at best and plan B seemed to still be in development as we made the same errors over and over, then had to scramble to win the ball back and start again.

Too often a pass would be underhit and the recipient, rather than heading up the park into a bit of space, found himself running towards the ball in order to receive it, then playing it backwards with an opponent snapping at his multi-coloured boots. Longer balls to the ever eager forwards were often met with an iffy first touch and later, in the Spartans game especially, when we finally got into good positions the shooting was as threatening as the Milky Bar Kid (ask your Dad). If you don't take your own chances, or have a missile up your sleeve, your mistakes at the back will catch up with you and it was mighty disappointing that a poor Spartans team took

advantage of a late cock-up to take all 3 points. If I ever win the lottery I will buy Ainslie Park, dismantle every crappy little bit of it, shove it through an industrial mincing machine and dispose of it in an ethical manner (or dump it in Cowdenbeath).

I haven't seen any footage from the win at Caledonian Braves, but by the time the East Kilbride and Edinburgh Uni games came around something had clicked on the training ground. Suddenly the passing from the back and the first touch was much better and Euan Smith was controlling the midfield in a way not seen since Lee Currie was snarling his way around the park. Personally I think this is a result of the rest of the team realising that the defence isn't suddenly going to cave in on a whim and can now play with a smidge of confidence. And while we're on the subject of dodgy defenders, here is a quote from the Bonnyrigg Rose match report – dated 7th November this year – which kind of illustrates the point:

“Despite undoubtedly being on top, with 10 minutes of the half left, Rose found themselves behind. Bob Wilson lost out in the middle of his own half after some neat interplay, and.....” You know what happened next as you've seen that script played out countless times.

We looked good against moneybags EK and deserved something from the game, though there are still obvious things for individuals to learn such as knowing what is likely to happen when you're on a yellow card, then tackle someone with your eyes shut.

Yano was over cautious against the University team when he moved Euan Smith back into defence to cover for the missing Jack Cook and the suspended Craig Reid. And by the way, what is it with our injuries? Cook has missed 3 games with “concussion”, which I assume is a result of 2 years of banging his head against a brick wall (unless the cherry picker was accidentally lowered on to him after his post-game man of the match

EK interview). It has always been thus – I remember that if Steve Notman cut himself shaving, he would be out for at least 3 weeks. The improvement continued at BSC Glasgow and though the home team had the better chances, I thought we played really well – assured on the ball in all areas of the pitch against another good side. Unfortunately though, I have to rein in team positive a little because we are still lacking something fundamental from our team. And that is flair. We have nobody who will make that darting run into the box, that cheeky dribble, that bit of something extra that frightens defenders and takes up a big chunk of their attention. Dan Purves might have it, Lewy Barr might have it and it would be good to see at least one of them given a free role. The Bonnyrigg match report was from the same day we lost to a reportedly ordinary Bo'ness side that outfought us and coped with our already predictable style.

And so to individuals. Well it's good to see an assured keeper in Dougie Horne, but the big plusses are just ahead of him with a defence that looks like a defence rather than a set of traffic bollards. Ryan Finnie has been absolutely outstanding and Cook and Reid have been excellent too. Euan Smith, Sam Daniel and the surprise of the team – Jack Wright – have also impressed in midfield, whilst up front Callum Smith works his socks off. I've been disappointed though with Grant Nelson and Lewis Allan whilst Kieran Somerville and Jordan Sinclair have only shone in patches – but I hope they are still in the “settling in” phase and will gradually improve. With Lewy Barr and Kev Waugh soon to come back I'm still confident – after a sticky start – that this team will mirror the off the field progress and I reckon attendances will be well up when our rusty turnstiles creak back into action.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP FOR DENNIS

by DAVID LETHAM

Club Secretary Dennis McCleary has been named as an Honorary member of the Supporters Trust. Dennis joined as Assistant Secretary in 1970 and despite a couple of short spells away from the club still fills the role today after over 50 years. Dennis, a former postman, is one of the most recognisable



figures in lower league Scottish football and is often referred to as a stalwart of The Borderers. Dennis has also been involved with Berwick Speedway for a similar length of time, fulfilling a number of roles with the speedway club.

After writing to Dennis to extend the offer of Trust honorary membership Dennis was delighted to accept.

“That is most kind and accepted with many thanks, please pass on this on to the Committee”

Dennis has been sent an Honorary membership certificate to commemorate his induction as an honorary member of the Trust.

Dennis had these words to say when he was named Honorary Vice-President of Berwick Rangers Football Club during his 50th year

working for the club. Words that are worth repeating.

“Little did I think when Harry Melrose asked me to come and assist during the 1969/70 season, I would still be here 50 seasons later, give or take a couple of short spells away.

There have been plenty of ups and downs as you can imagine. Two championships stand out and a league medal in the 1978/79 season as Club Secretary. I think I have worked with 22 Managers. However, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter who is Chairman, Manager or Secretary, the club comes first. Simply, there is no one bigger than the club.

Over the years we have always tried to be professional and I think the SFA, SPFL and now Lowland League appreciate that. We have always had good relationships with them, and I think they appreciate us as we do them.

As for how long I'll continue for, I've hinted at stepping down a couple of times and maybe sooner rather than later someone younger can take over the role but, whatever happens, I will always continue to back the club.”



KEEP THE HIGH BALLS LOW FOOTBALL PODCAST

Hosted by **LEWIS BARR**

Hello and welcome to keep the high balls low. As always I will be your host, Lewis Barr. Tonight, I'm delighted to be joined by... An introduction I am still trying to get used to.

Hosting/presenting was something I never envisioned doing. However, it is an intro that is now consistently a part of my weekly routine. In Football and in life this has been a really harrowing year (and the rest) for all of us. Life, as we know it, has been

ripped away from us and our lives stacked on top of one and other for longer than we care to remember. Of course, life and our loved ones come before anything. Their safety is number one priority and they are the most important thing for us to preserve. However, football is not very far behind in importance. Some people say that Bill Shankly was being a little extreme when he told us that Football was more important than life and death. I can see where he was coming from.

Many of us have taken up hobbies during each of the lockdowns. Running, Arts and crafts, gardening, annoying our partners to levels we never thought we could get to and sewing. During the first lockdown which I believe started around March 2020- It was running for me. I have always taken great pride in my fitness and as you may have seen at Berwick I probably run around too much- much to the annoyance of my team mates

as I'm often found overlapping my own full backs. We all believed that the first lockdown would be relatively short, myself included. So, the idea of keeping fit for a few weeks on my own didn't really phase me.



A few weeks turned into a few months and the novelty of exercising had worn off for all of us. It still wasn't long enough for me to start watching repeats of love island- which I am very proud of.

The world had become a sad and worrying place at this point and as I mentioned earlier, our priority was our loved ones. Especially the most vulnerable and my sole focus was certainly the most vulnerable in my family but I still dearly missed Football. I missed playing but I also missed the routine of training and meeting up with the boys. I missed everyone at the club. Dennis is normally the first person I would see on match days. I would often arrive early at the ground, especially if I had travelled down on the train and I would be greeted by Dennis and then would have the opportunity to sit and chat with our kit man- Jim. These are the things and people I was missing during the long months with no Football. Finally, after a long wait, we would get the shout that training could commence again. A great relief.

We had returned to training after a long lay-off and it was such a great relief. Yes, training

was tough but I would have taken two nights a week at Gullane beach on murder hill just to get some sense of routine and normality back in my life again. Unfortunately for myself, two weeks into a return to training I suffered a nasty foot injury which would keep me out for six weeks. A blow, but I was determined not to get too down as there was worse injuries to suffer and six weeks isn't too bad in the context of a football season. I worked my way back to fitness and after around four weeks I was feeling a lot better and nearing a return to training. Timing is very important in Football and I have had instances when timing has been on my side. This time it would work against me and curtail my return to fitness significantly. At this point I had been suffering from chronic hip pain for well over two years. I had been waiting for over a year and the fact that Covid was showing no signs of going away I believed that this operation could take a few years to eventually come if I turned down the chance to have it when it eventually came. As I neared a return from my foot injury, I received a letter that I was to go in for my operation at the end of November. It was a real blow but I believed I had to take it. I was dreading telling the gaffer that just as I was due back to play, I would need to go in for my operation. I had only done light training but the gaffer was kind enough to put me on for the last ten minutes and then again for the last twenty minutes of our memorable come-back win against Stirling (I take no credit).

I had my operation and then for my recovery I was to take two months off my work and I could also not go and watch the boys for a while. As I said before during the first lockdown, running was my chosen sport to keep me focused and ticking over. Now, I didn't have running to keep me going. I thought about the idea to start a Podcast a while before my operation and time off. There's not a day goes by when I don't listen to a podcast and I fall asleep listening to one every night. I was unsure at first about starting my Podcast as I didn't think I would be any good at it. I started to come round to the idea through a

little desperation, I think. Starting a Podcast meant that I would have something worthy to focus on and to distract myself from the challenges I was facing. Then I realized that as long as I could get good guests on then I wouldn't have to be the perfect host. It would all be about the guests and their story. I got excited as I started to plan my Podcast and think about who I could have on to tell their story. I had always known who I wanted my first guest to be. Keith Wright.

I am lucky to have been coached by Keith Wright and I can now call him a friend. Keith is one of the best coaches I have worked under and I was coached by him mainly at Penicuik. I am also a Hibs fan so I was delighted he agreed to come on- as was my dad. I have a real passion for reading and researching the older generations of Footballers and Football teams and I can spend hours doing this and also on each of my guests. I am obsessed with learning about all the great teams from Scotland and also down south. It could be the great Liverpool teams, Busby babes, Leeds, Rangers, Nottingham Forest, Lisbon lions, Aberdeen, Dundee united- the list goes on. I love reading and listening to stories about the Football eras gone by more than the modern-day players and teams. Although I do love them both. I'm not sure where this obsession comes from but I think it has served me well during my Podcast so far. I thought I knew quite a bit about Keith's career but when he came on to tell his story, Keith really blew me away. I find that you learn things that no research or source could give you because it comes straight from the guest and may be something that not many people- if any, know about them. Keith was so generous and kind with his time as I knew he would be.

I have been very lucky with the guests I have had on so far and I have loved every minute of doing the Podcast. The Podcast is all about the quality of guests and I just get to sit back and enjoy it. I have been lucky to have a real mix of guests so far. Ivan Sproule and Rob Jones are guys who I grew up watching at

Easter Road, but I equally enjoyed ex Hearts legend Gary Mackay's interview. Gary was one of my first coaches in Football and his career and story was fascinating. The only bit I did not enjoy was the twentytwo game unbeaten derby run that he enjoyed!. I have also been lucky enough to have a couple of guests who enjoyed stellar careers in England. David Hodgson blew me away with tales of playing alongside Rush, Dalglish, Hansen and Souness. Paul Miller looking up and seeing his team-mate Glen Hoddle glide over the Spurs turf, playing in front of the great Ray Clemence and his tales of being friends with Bobby Moore was really something. I have no grand ambitions for my Podcast. I feel that it has already been a success as I was able to have an idea and then follow it through. The Podcast has really kept me going and given me the chance to spend more time doing what I love. I hope that I can continue making many more Podcasts and I am determined to

one day do football related work full time.

I would like to end this article by saying thanks to Berwick Rangers and everyone who is connected with the club. During these challenging times Berwick have supported me and the rest of the players all the way through it and I know how hard everyone at the club and the supporters have worked to keep Berwick Rangers going and moving forward against all odds. I can't wait for us to get back so I can start to repay the support they have given me during my operation and time off. Thanks to David Letham for letting me write a few words and for supporting my Podcast. I can't wait to see the supporters back inside the ground and we will do everything we can as a team to bring the good times back to Berwick. Until then, I hope everyone stays safe. Look after each other and see you soon.



BERWICK RANGERS WILDCATS!

by DAVID LETHAM

Have fun, make friends and play football!

The sessions will provide an environment where girls can learn to enjoy and love the "Beautiful Game". The sessions will be run by our fully qualified FA coaches with the emphasis on the girls all round development, designed with the following statements at their core:

To Have Fun, To Make Friends and To Play Football.

We look forward to welcoming you to being part of Berwick Rangers FC.

Time to get involved!

The first Wildcats sessions will be held on the new 3G pitch at the Swan Centre for Leisure. Further details and how to sign up can be found on the Berwick Rangers website.



Berwick Rangers Community Foundation were excited to reveal that they would be bringing the first FA Wildcats Centre to Berwick-upon-Tweed. This was achieved after their fully FA-qualified FA coaching team completed the 'Weetabix Wildcats' training course.

Providing non-competitive football for girls who want to give it a go for the very first time or who simply want to play with other girls their own age, Weetabix Wildcats programmes put fun at their core with the focus on creating new friendships for the youths involved.

On the successful launch of the Wildcats' Head of Girls and Women's teams Andy Thorpe said:

"We, The Berwick Rangers Girls Programme Team, are delighted to announce that we will be bringing the first FA Wildcats Centre to Berwick upon Tweed. This is a National programme to encourage girls from 5-11 to "Have Fun", "Make Friends" and "Play Football". It has been a challenge to get accreditation to host an FA Wildcats Centre, but we are looking forward to Berwick Rangers FC Community Foundation giving girls in North Northumberland and the Borders the chance to experience the "Beautiful Game". We are also going to be offering girls 12+ the chance to train with our fully qualified FA & SFA coaches. We look forward to welcoming you to our brand new 3G facility at the Swan Centre on Thursday May 6th"

The Berwick Rangers Girls Programme is launching a weekly FA Wildcats session for girls aged 5-11.

ST ANDREWS BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS CLUB

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

(working from home is the answer...)

by DAVID LETHAM

Where to start with this season? This year even? Let's start with the hopeful return to football next season with fans in the stadium and points on the board. Berwick have a squad of players that we wouldn't normally have at this time of year, so that's something. Unfortunately, they can't train together but I'm sure they have ways of keeping in touch and getting to know one another. Here is hoping for a good season next year. Turning those nearly wins in to wins.

We have seen that the Lowland league is a tough league to be in. Promotion is difficult at the best of times and teams in the Lowland league are getting stronger, investment is increasing. The opening up of the pyramid structure a few seasons ago is now showing the desire and commitment that clubs are now putting in to get into the top leagues and the money it can offer. It may not be a lot of money in the grand scheme of the football league but £40k for finishing last in League 2 with parachute payments to follow is a significant increase from £0 in the Lowland league. Cove Rangers have raced up the league structure and are currently scrapping it out for the top spot in League 1, I suspect Kelty Hearts and Brora Rangers given the chance could do the same.

As I am writing this, we are still waiting for a date for the playoff between Kelty Hearts and Brora Rangers. One proposed date has been and gone with "decisions to be made" pending. Last season it was a disaster for Kelty and Brora, playoffs cancelled and the

proposed league reconstruction was declined, a reconstruction the Scottish leagues really need. There are good teams now hungry to join the upper leagues. This is what the pyramid was designed for.

It would appear the Brechin (who are sitting bottom of league 2 again) are looking for a way to stay in league 2. Some say it's not their fault, others say they should take their medicine. The arguments are wide ranging. Kelty shouldn't be champions because they were declared on points per game and didn't finish the season. Brora declared champions after playing only 3 games.

I'm of the opinion that it doesn't matter how they were declared Champions. If the leagues have agreed champions, the champions should be put forward for the playoffs. Brechin will have to play the winners of Kelty v Brora. There is no reason that I can see that this shouldn't happen. Brora were allowed to train and play in the Scottish cup. Brechin are pinning their hopes on the playoff being scrapped due to the nature of the way the champions were declared. There is also the push again for league reconstruction. Adding Kelty and Brora to the league and the other option of adding Kelty, Brora and the colts teams from Rangers and Celtic. Decisions need to be made; it is unfair all round to leave clubs guessing.

There's not much happening with St Andrews Berwick Rangers Supporters. No football to go to, no streams to watch, everybody

working from home. It's hard to get motivated about the game. The blog has been put on hold; my motivation has been curtailed by the lack of the beautiful game.

The club have been doing some great work throughout the whole lockdown period. They have maintained good communication on social media and some good campaigns to keep the interest levels up. The let it BRFC podcast has been incredible. It has really helped keep the club and fans connected. Adam Hunter the host has done some great work managing it. He deserves a lot of credit. It is an interesting and engaging podcast and is a credit to Adam and the club that this was launched and is of such a high quality.

A grand national sweepstake to raise funds

and a draw to boost the transfer coffers were launched by the club. The 1881 club continues to be a good source of regular income too. The supporters club revamping the weekly scheme into a monthly draw has had a positive impact. A sizeable portion of the draw going to local Charities and really boosting the connections with the local community. All very positive and encouraging for the club. The Trust have also been raising the profile of the club within the community. The launch of community and charity partners on the website and promoting the partners on social media are helping to promote the club with the community. The community foundation has also been pushing on, recently launching the Berwick wildcats girls football initiative.



A LIFETIME COMMITMENT

by PHIL LOCKWOOD

My history with Berwick Rangers started in the early 1980's while I was at Junior School in Brighton. Myself and my little gang of friends decided that alongside our teams we supported in the English League, we should also all pick a team from the Scottish League to support as well.

I'd best come clean now and say that my English League team are Brighton & Hove Albion and I've been a die-hard fan all my life. I've been a season ticket holder when I was living in the area, used to go to away games when living in London and have been to the Amex Community Stadium on visits to see my family, who still live in Brighton. I left Brighton in my 20's and have moved about between London and then Guernsey in The Channel Islands, where I've now settled, divorced and I have 4 children. I must also confess that I have not yet been to Berwick-upon-Tweed, although half of my paternal side of the family are from Stockton-on-Tees (still a bit of a distance away)! I will be correcting the lack of a Shielfield Park visit as soon as I can when life is eventually back to normal, which is being gently encouraged by Andrew Allan with the suggestion of entry to Hospitality for myself and my son!

But back to the choice of a Scottish League team. Even though we lived in Brighton, several of my friends who were Liverpool and Manchester United fans, quite predictably went for the Celtic or Rangers option and there was also an Aberdeen (as they had just won the European Cup Winners Cup). However, being a bit of an anorak, I put some research into my choice and found an article in a book or magazine that listed teams that play in a different countries' league than the country they are located in. It started off by talking about Cardiff City, Swansea City, Wrexham

and Newport County. It then moved on to the situation of Berwick Rangers in the Scottish



League. I quite arrogantly thought that I had been really clever in finding an English team to support and smugly explained my choice. I was completely oblivious to the fact that Berwick's squad has undoubtedly been primarily made up of Scottish lads over the years.

I strongly suspect that all of my other friends have long since forgotten their Scottish team choices, but curiously mine stuck with me and has grown over the years. I'm glad to say that the originally xenophobic reason for selecting Berwick has fallen by the wayside over the years and has given me an unconditional love of the club. I got myself a shirt, which was a design classic from the 1990's (as pictured) and still wear it for occasional 5-a-side matches, which is always a talking point that prompts questions from the other players.

I try not to feel too embarrassed that I support a team from a town that I have never actually

set foot in. I justify that based on the amount of Liverpool and Manchester United fans there are across the country who are in the same position and is a far worse offence in my opinion!

One of the things I've tried to do over the years is do some reading and educate myself in the club's history, like the 1967 Scottish Cup win over Rangers and saw them beat Vale of Leithen 8-1 during that famous cup run.

Obviously, the low point of my Wee Gers career is the relegation to the Lowland League in 2019. I was genuinely gutted and feared for the future of the club. The main reason for my fears was based upon the similar situation that Brighton & Hove Albion had experienced in 1996/97 season. Brighton were bottom of Division 3 and cut adrift by 11 points in December. We changed manager and performances improved to the extent that the last game of the season was against Hereford United in a straight shoot-out to see who would get relegated from the Football League to the Conference. That season the club had sold their Goldstone ground to pay off some (but not all) of its debts and a Toys R Us (now defunct themselves) was built on that site, which fans boycotted. All the fans were convinced that if we did get relegated then the club would fold, and it really felt like a realistic prediction. Hereford needed to win to stay up and Brighton needed a draw. Hereford scored first and we got a late equaliser and stayed up on Goals Scored. Brighton played the next few seasons at Gillingham and now we have a new shiny stadium and playing in the Premier League. It has been a massive turnaround in fortune.

However, I'm glad to say, my fears for the future of The Borderers were overly pessimistic. What I've seen is a proper Community club have everyone rally around and make the most of its resources and help, it has at its disposal. It is nothing but inspirational to see this happening from a distance. I think the Supporters Trust and Supporters deserve

a round of applause and recognition of how they have kept the show on the road. I am now a very proud member of the Rangers Supporters Trust, but obviously not trying claim I've been involved in the sterling efforts that were made.

Although the eventuality of this season is unknown, I was encouraged to see the club stabilizing in mid-table and putting some points distance between us and the bottom. Obviously, we would all like to see Rangers near the top, but I feel confident that eventually we'll be able to push for promotion/playoff back to Scottish League Two. I think for now the steadying of the ship is being achieved and creating a platform to launch from.

One initiative that I was really impressed with is the sale of shares in the club and I am now also a very chuffed minority shareholder in the club. Obviously, I'm not expecting a Return on those Shares, but it's an excellent way of raising funds for the club and I'm happy to have the Certificate. More shares are now on order for birthday and Christmas. However, if a rich Dubai Sheikh or Russian Oligarch benefactor comes in with a blank cheque, we could all be quids-in and see some marquee signings!

One of my principals of football support or anything else that people are passionate about, is stolen and adapted from a more famous saying, is 'It's not about what Berwick Rangers can do for me, but more what can I do for Berwick Rangers?'

My main participation sport nowadays is Racewalking and I've done 4 London Marathons and won medals at National and County level. My sons both have their own main sports which are Tennis and Karting. The link between those three, is that I've involved myself in sports administration for all three of those sports and specialise in obtaining sponsorship, equipment and cold cash to assist in the running and subsidising of all three sports in Guernsey.

Even though I am located in Guernsey, I'm more than happy to take on any projects that the Club or Supporter's Trust have in mind, where some sort of resources are required. I have a laptop and internet access, so I can very easily do the research and approach people/businesses in the Northumberland area or further afield. The advantage that most members of the Trust have over me is having visibility on the ground as to what is needed or wanted. So, please accept this as an open invitation to contact me with any ideas you might have, and I'll give them a try (obviously with the approval of the correct officials or committees).

One of my daydream thoughts of an idea is Berwick Rangers coming to Guernsey for some pre-season training and a couple of tour games. Guernsey has its own team in the English football pyramid, called Guernsey FC. They will resume playing in the Isthmian League, South-East Division, once the Covid regulations are eventually aligned between the UK and Channel Islands & people can move freely again. As Guernsey is its own jurisdiction, one of the conditions of entry to the English football pyramid was that Guernsey FC must cover the travel and accommodation costs of all visiting teams (on top of covering their own away game costs as well). This is

made possible through the Club organising sponsorship and bulk deals with the local airline, hotels and international banks.

The island is an international financial centre and there are a disproportionate number of banks & financial institutions that have located here which have significant sponsorship budgets, which they are keen to use for visibility in the local community. In addition to this, Guernsey FC have been starved of opposition over the last year or so because of Covid restrictions and have only been able to play a few friendlies against the Isle of Man. I have a feeling that Berwick would be invited with open arms, once the world starts to get back to normal again. I'm sure that Guernsey FC would assist me in getting the money and/or give me some good local contacts.

I completely admit that the last paragraph contains a fair amount of self-indulgence, as I would be getting Rangers to come to me, then I can go and watch. I'm also confident that Rangers would prevail in such a fixture. But, if anybody has more realistic or saner ideas/finance requests for the club and/or Supporter's Trust, I am willing, keen, and will try to make it happen (as per above approvals). My e-mail address is Lockers2@yahoo.com.

TRUST BOARD SEEKING NEW MEMBERS

by **DAVID LETHAM**

The Trust is actively seeking new members for our Board. Joining the Trust board is an opportunity to enhance your life* while helping to shape and influence the football club and with the personal satisfaction of knowing that you are making a difference.

Being a member of the Trust Board brings you deeper into the Berwick Rangers community. It's an opportunity to learn about the business of the football club and getting to know and understand the kinds of people who work with the club. The Trust have donated over £100,000 to The Football Club and this is an opportunity to influence how that investment is made; be that supporting the signing of players, stadium work and a wide range of support. We also promote and help great causes in the community.

The Trust board meets once a month via zoom and has regular email correspondence. Distance is no object to being a board member as we would continue to conduct our meetings online to make them more accessible and easier to arrange. We currently have board members in Fife and Renfrewshire as well as the local Berwick area.

Do you think you have something to offer? opinions and ideas? Then please get in touch by emailing trust@berwickrangers.org The Trust would be delighted to hear from you.

*Life enhancement will vary from person to person. The Trust cannot fully guarantee any life enhancement.

BE THE 12TH MAN!
www.berwickrangers.org





Club 1881 is an exclusive membership, paid by monthly subscription, that allows supporters to assist the club in transforming its cashflow throughout a year, helping to safeguard the future of the club and provide a solid foundation to build upon for success.

For just £18.81 per month, you can become part of an exclusive community of Dream Team supporters who are helping to make their club a more sustainable entity. Club 1881 members are rewarded for their invaluable

support with an abundance of exclusive content and benefits.

Joining Club 1881 is simple as setting up a Direct Debit, and thanks to the easy, trustworthy tool we're using to help you do just that, it's never been easier to do. Simply input your details into the form and your payment of £18.81 will be taken on the final working day of each calendar month.

<https://berwickrangers.com/club1881>

MEMBERSHIP

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- EXCLUSIVE DIGITAL CONTENT, INCLUDING LET IT BRFC EPISODES, PLAYER INTERVIEWS, NEWSLETTERS AND MORE.
- RAFFLE ENTRY FOR A YEAR'S MEMBERSHIP.
- QUARTERLY MEETINGS WITH THE MANAGEMENT TEAM
- ADMISSION TO ALL HOME LOWLAND LEAGUE GAMES
- EXCLUSIVE SHOP DISCOUNTS & EARLY ACCESS TO SALES
- A BOND SCHEME NUMBER - WIN £200
- FULL MATCH FOOTAGE & DIGITAL PROGRAMME

BUSINESS TIER

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- ALL EXCLUSIVE CONTENT, AS INCLUDED WITH INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS.
- AN ANNUAL PASS TO THE JB LOUNGE FOR HOME LEAGUE MATCHDAYS
- ADVERTISING SPACE ON THE CLUB'S OFFICIAL SITE
- AN ADVERTISING BOARD INSIDE SHIELDFIELD PARK
- A BOND SCHEME NUMBER
- PROMOTION VIA 'GERS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



WIN £1,000 EVERY MONTH

How would you like to be in with the chance of winning £1,000 every month? If that sounds appealing, then you need to join Berwick Rangers Supporters Club's Monthly Draw.

For just £5 per month, you'll go into a draw with hundreds of other Berwick Rangers FC fans to win the monthly jackpot.

In addition to the £1,000 prize, the Supporters Club also donates £250 each month to a chosen local charity or organisation - with the rest of the profits from the draw going to the Football Club.

Sign up by scanning the QR code with your smartphone camera or by typing the following into your web browser: cutt.ly/sc-monthly-draw



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CHARITY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The trust has a diverse range of corporate members and charity and community partners. Charity and community partners are a recent addition as we try to build links with the community and highlight the local support that is on offer. All are featured on the trust website.

Corporate Members

We are proud to have our corporate members on board with us.



THE PILOT INN

The Pilot offers a real home from home. They are proud members of CAMRA and always have at least three Real Ales on tap. Bar meals are available 7 days a week and a warm welcome is especially extended to all Berwick Rangers fans and supporters of visiting teams.

31 Low Greens, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland
Tel: 01289 304214

BERWICK YOUTH PROJECT



The Project is a registered charity that looks to help every young person in the Berwick area be the best that they can be!

The Project opened in 1995, after concerns that many young people found it difficult to get help and support in the local area and since then the services have expanded rapidly to create the multi-functional service that it is today.

<http://www.berwickyouthproject.co.uk>



St Andrews Berwick Rangers Supporters
www.berwickranger.co.uk

ST ANDREWS BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS

A group of Berwick Rangers supporters with a connection to St Andrews University. The group are a combination of students and staff and a few family members thrown into the mix. Most members are still in Fife, but a few are further afield in such exotic location as Belfast, Newcastle and Lanarkshire. They are player kit sponsors, have an advertising board in the ground and hold thousands of shares in the club between them. Find out more here: <https://www.berwickranger.com/who-are-we-and-contact-info.html>

www.berwickranger.co.uk

Charity and Community Members



BERWICK CANCER CARS

The Berwick & District Cancer Support Group was founded in 1992 and our main service is to provide free transport to any cancer sufferer to all major hospitals in our area. The group is entirely made up of volunteers and we rely on the help and support of everyone in the community. Get in touch with us to find out more and help us by supporting the many events and activities that the community hold in aid of our charity.

<https://berwickcancersupport.co.uk>



B.A.R.K.

B.A.R.K. short for Berwick Animal Rescue Kennels, is a registered charity (Number 1083038 in England and Wales and SC038235 in Scotland) and is active and growing. B.A.R.K provides temporary refuge for unwanted and stray domestic animals. Wherever possible it is our objective to re-home them. Our area of operation is north and south of the Scottish Border, although we will take animals in from all areas, in reality this generally means within about 60 miles of the kennels, although we have had animals in from as far North as Aberdeen and as far South as London.

<https://b-a-r-k.co.uk>



NORTHERN SOUL KITCHEN

We are a collaborative community space in which we take unsold, yet edible food from supermarkets, local shops and households to create affordable and balanced meals for all.

Essentially, everything we do is to tackle the following issues:

- food waste in the local area
- food poverty and instability
- social isolation and integration
- a lack of understanding about food and nutrition

<https://www.northernsoulkitchen.co.uk>



SWAN AND WILDLIFE TRUST

The historic Borders town of Berwick-upon-Tweed is home to Britain's second largest mute swan moulting colony. The Berwick Swan and Wildlife Trust was formed in 1992, following a major pollution incident in the River Tweed estuary, to provide support for the local swan herd as well as other wildlife in the area.

<http://www.swan-trust.org>



BERWICK RANGERS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Community Foundation – a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) – is set to assist and organise a range of local, community projects that vary from club to club, including the provision of sports coaching, use of facilities, education and assisting those in need.

<https://berwickrangers.com/berwick-rangers-community-foundation-launched/>



IAN RUNCIMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Ian is a photographer for the football club and we often use his images in the Trust magazine. We have used some iconic shots of his on the front covers.

<https://www.facebook.com/Ian-Runciman-Photography-481717625569496/>



BERWICK COMMUNITY TRUST

Berwick Community Trust is a charity working to develop and regenerate Berwick upon Tweed for the good of all residents. They also runs the Berwick foodbank.

Berwick Community Trust was established in 2004 with the mission to secure a prosperous and vibrant Berwick-upon-Tweed.

<https://berwicktrust.org.uk>



THE NORTHSTAR CENTRE

The Northstar Centre is a Northumberland County Council managed day service for adults with learning disabilities in Berwick-upon-Tweed and the surrounding area. We offer a wide range of activities designed specifically around our clients' developmental and individual care needs.

<https://www.facebook.com/NorthstarCentre>



SPITTAL IMPROVEMENT TRUST

The Spittal Improvement Trust (SIT) was formed in 1998 out of concerns expressed by the local community with regard to the continuing decline in Spittal. SIT's aims are to carry out project works in an effort to halt the further decline in our local facilities, improve the environment we live in and to raise community spirit by holding events.

<http://spittalisgreat.co.uk>



NORTHERN SPIRIT BERWICK

Northern Spirit Berwick are a Peer Support Group for people suffering Mental Health conditions like depression and anxiety issues. We would like to welcome new members to our group, whatever form of Mental Health problems you have, any age from 18+, feel free to come along at any time. Our group currently meet on Wednesdays from 10am until 4pm, taking part in various activities, from quizzes to walks, crafts to card games.

<http://northernspiritberwick.co.uk>



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