



# Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

*Working for Club & Community*

TRUST MEMBERS NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2010 • FREE TO MEMBERS • ISSUE NO. 17

## **NEW MEMBERSHIP DRIVE KICKS OFF**

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We Support Reserves



New Junior Trust Formed



Trust Help Improve Facilities

[www.berwickrangers.co.uk](http://www.berwickrangers.co.uk)



## Greetings...

Here we are again almost at the end of another year. Like all other years in the life of our Trust it's been a busy one. We have undertaken various pieces of work which we all hope have benefited our football club. This is our first newsletter since the summer and in that short space of time a lot has happened.

Back in June a discussion took place around the possibility of organising a member's survey. In the following months this became reality with board member Eric Deighton taking on the responsibility of actually getting it done. This has subsequently proved to be an extremely important piece of work for us, as regards telling us how you think we as a board are doing on your behalf. This we intend to share with the football club and supporters club as it is a unique exercise relating to our club. From that we formed several sub committees who were tasked to take forward your thoughts and actually put them into practice. So we do listen to what you tell us!

Around that time as well we were able to further help the football club by giving them **£12500**, part of which was the handing over of the club shop operation.

In September we held another one of our successful race nights in Berwick, where our guest was

Jimmy Crease, and we managed to raise a substantial sum which ultimately will find its way back to the football club. Thanks to all for that, you know who you are.

As part of a planned recruitment drive we held a recruitment day prior to a home match, also in September, where several board member "manned" (apologies girls) a stand at the turnstiles where those concerned did extremely well signing up several new members on the day, as well as reinforcing our presence to all those present.

We also decided that due to ongoing fiscal restraints, which few of us have been immune from, that we would freeze membership fees for another year. However, you are of course free to pay more if you're feeling particularly "flush".

We have also restarted our online communication with yourselves, assuming you have the facility off course, with a new revamped eNewsletter which hopefully those of you that have received it will like the look of. On that subject, from the data we have, a number of you may have changed your email addresses since you originally notified us. Can I ask you if that is the case to update your details which can be done quite simply via the Trust website.

This only really leaves me to wish you all a happy festive season and continued good health. You never know come next May we may all have something extra to celebrate.

Keep the faith.

Colin Pike, Chairman



## vice-chairman

DAVID COOK

From a Trust perspective, this has been one of the most exciting periods in our brief but incident-packed history. How so? Well, Eric Deighton's survey is the first of its kind carried out by any organisation connected to the football club, and it's fair to say that the survey has opened not one but several cans of worms, in a good way. The survey has uncovered our members thoughts about the way the Trust is run, and about how people view the Trust and the way that they relate to the football club.

The vast majority of feedback about the Trust has been very positive, and it's heartening to know that we're continuing to represent you in a way that is keeping our membership happy. Some of the most revealing information gathered by the survey has been about the Berwick Rangers support - and the worrying fact that our core support is getting older while not enough young people are getting hooked on the Black and Gold. We're of the view that growing future generations of Berwick Rangers supporters,

many of whom are much more IT and multimedia literate than any of us old Luddites, is the way to go. That's because they'll be the people responsible for making sure this community holds on to the invaluable asset that is Berwick Rangers FC long after we've headed off to the great Shielfield in the sky.

So it gladdens the heart to be able to report that we've established a junior Trust section, which is reported in detail elsewhere in this newsletter. These people represent the future of Berwick Rangers, and we will be working closely with them to help them succeed. The Berwick Rangers board have reacted positively to developments by introducing a new under 18 season ticket for £30 - remarkable value in this day and age.

I'm also pleased to be able to report that we've arrested and turned round the inevitable decline in Trust membership (which had fallen from 235 to 205, principally down to the fact that many people with only the most passing interest in the club

sign up for a year and then don't renew because their interest has been sated and they've moved on to something else. We're back up to 233 (including junior members) and the imminent launch of the 1+1 campaign, detailed elsewhere in this newsletter, should take us to a new membership high.

I'll close by thanking you all for your continued support. We've come a long way in a pretty short time, but the hard work starts now. Berwick is the lowest waged area in England, with an average salary of £18,600 a year for someone in full time employment. The effects of the odious George Osborne's slash and burn policies will be felt more keenly here than almost anywhere else, and with our local elected representatives apparently oblivious to the community value of our local football club, we need to stay on the ball to make sure we do our best with the money you donate to the Trust.

David Cook  
Vice-Chairman

## membership update

BILL PURVIS

### MEMBERSHIP CURRENTLY: 217

At first glance it would appear that, since our last Newsletter, that there has been no movement in the membership. However, that could not be further from the true picture. Since May we have lost 23 Members (20 Full + 3 Junior) most of these being annual payers who for one reason or another did not wish to renew their subscription. During the same period, due to a lot of hard work by your Board Members, we have gained 23 members (21 Full + 2 Juniors).

These figures do not take into account the membership of the very enthusiastic new Junior Section which I understand is currently 16. Your Board is always looking for ways of increasing membership and hopefully, with your help, the 1+1 initiative will prove a great success. Finally, if you change your address or email address please remember to let us know so that we can keep you updated of events etc. This can be done either on our website or alternatively by mail to the normal address.

Bill Purvis, Membership Secretary

## Newsletter No. 17 Winter 2010

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Pictures by Joe Payne, Doug Stenhouse & Angus Blackburn

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**Like every other supporters Trust in the country, we face a constant uphill struggle trying to maintain our membership levels.**

Fact is, we've actually bucked the national trend by keeping hold of a membership equivalent to around 50% of our average home gate. In these straitened financial times, that's a real achievement. However, the harsh reality of Coalition Britain is that everyone is having to tighten their belts, and that means that luxuries like Trust memberships are often the first victims of that financial belt-tightening.

Despite that, we strongly believe that the Trust offers good value for money - a claim borne out by our record of supporting the football club, improving the stadium, youth and community development.

We're looking to future-proof the Trust by increasing our membership. We aim to do that by launching what we've christened the 1+1 Campaign.

The 1+1 Campaign is simple - we'd like every existing Trust member to go out and recruit at least one new Trust member before the season ends in May 2011. Everyone who recruits a new member will be entered into a prize draw to win a Berwick Rangers shirt signed by the current team. You'll shortly be receiving a flyer promoting the 1+1 Campaign - we'd love you to get out there and get some new recruits signed up. At £2 per month, we're still cheaper than a pint of ale. Speaking of which, Trust corporate sponsor, board member and mine host at real ale haven The Pilot, Spadge, has jumped the gun by recruiting 5 new members. He's raised the bar - here's hoping you can all do the same.

Please make sure your new recruit names you on their Trust membership forms. That way we can keep track of who's recruited who and make sure you're entered into the prize draw. Happy recruiting.

**For further information and to sign up online: [www.berwickrangers.co.uk](http://www.berwickrangers.co.uk)**



■ *Chairman Colin Pike leads by example, signing up new corporate member Stephen Green*



■ *Right: How the dressing rooms used to look.*

*Above: The brand new facilities which rival most SFL clubs.*



During the close season the club has refurbished the home and away changing rooms at Shielfield. The work was carried out in response to the UEFA Club Licensing scheme which set certain standards clubs are required to achieve in order to be awarded the license. The Trust was happy to make a substantial donation to the work as part of our stated aim to improve the stadium. This picture of the home dressing room speaks for itself.

## Junior Trust formed after Member Survey reveals an age-old problem

The Member Survey has revealed a shocking statistic - our average age is over 50! Not a healthy situation and not sustainable for us, or the Club in the future. David Cook and Eric Deighton started work immediately on ideas to bring down the average age. Luckily there are some spirited 16 to 18-year-olds, willing to work for the Trust, Club and Community and the home game against Queens Park on Saturday 30 October saw the launch of the Junior Section of the Trust.

Five juniors will form the core of the Junior Trust and they have formed an organisation which mirrors the Senior Trust: Dale Jones will be the Chairman; Carl Patterson will be the Vice-Chairman; Ross Blenkinsop will be the Treasurer; James Thompson will be the Secretary and Gregor Thomson will be the Membership Secretary

The juniors will attend Senior Board meetings and will be responsible to the Main Board but will form their own agenda and programme of activities. Gregor reports that the Membership currently stands at 16, a phenomenal figure given the time they have existed.

**They have chosen to undertake programmes linked with A-Level studies which will help not just the Trust; but football in general and here are some examples of what they want to achieve:**

- A fund-raising 5-a-side football tournament, watch this space for details
- Creation of a junior section on the Trust website
- Filmed, edited and commentated highlights of games
- A survey of young people on attitudes and trends on football
- After the above, analysis and recommendations to the Football Club

Not a bad start! After a check with Supporters Direct it would appear that there is little or nothing like this happening anywhere else in football so we can be very proud of these first steps. The energy and enthusiasm of the junior team is exemplary and holds out the promise of a brighter future for the Trust and Berwick Rangers.

To get intouch with the Juniors, you can email: [trust@berwickrangers.co.uk](mailto:trust@berwickrangers.co.uk)



■ Pictured at Shielfield before the game with Paul McMullen, Paul Currie, Jimmy Crease and Trust Chairman Colin Pike are juniors Gregor Thomson, Dale Jones, Ross Blenkinsop and Carl Patterson

## More good news for Junior supporters

One of the first things tackled by the Junior Trust was pricing to games for people of their age group. They felt that entry prices to games rose too steeply after the age of thirteen and felt that this was unfair in a world where most people were still in full time education.

John Bell took up their case with the Club Board and helped win a major concession. John said "I've spoken to the Club Chairman and he's agreed with my proposal that we introduce a special season ticket for Junior Trust members, namely those aged 13 to 17 who face a huge

hike from free entry to games to then £5 a match or a £77 season book of tickets. The Chairman agreed to a £30 per season ticket for League games, with a launch ticket available at £15 at Christmas lasting to the end of the season to support the new junior section becoming established".

This really shows the power of a representative group pressing for change up to the very top of an establishment! Would this would have been possible just a few years ago? Decide for yourselves!



## Stay in Touch!



We want to make sure we stay in touch with you and report back on Trust activities, which is why you can help us to help you by keeping us updated if you move or change your e-mail address.

Some of you indicated to us that you would be happy to start receiving newsletters electronically, it was one of the things we asked you to comment about in the survey earlier in the year. If you would like to be added to this growing list you can contact us at [members@berwickrangers.co.uk](mailto:members@berwickrangers.co.uk), the same address as you can update your email or house details if they change.

If you sign up here you will also go on our mailing list for our regular 'e-newsletter'. Of course you can change your details at any time via the Trust Website. Go to the 'Trust Info' tab and click on 'Contact Us'.

The benefits? Well, number one we are committed to keeping our membership informed. We can keep costs down by sending information out electronically, which means we are looking after your money and able to devote more of it to the supporters and Club alike. It goes without saying there is an environmental reason for avoiding use of resources, another good reason to sign up. Keep in touch - contact us on: [trust@berwickrangers.co.uk](mailto:trust@berwickrangers.co.uk)

At the time of writing this half-term report (following the first defeat of the season away to Arbroath, and a day after Annan drew at home to Montrose to move a point above us), Berwick Rangers lie in 4th place in the Third Division. After a blistering start to the league campaign, which saw a free-scoring Rangers side rampage through its early fixture card to hit top spot, a winless run of six games has supporters wondering whether their team has hit its annual autumn slump.

That run features five draws and a defeat, which has crippled the momentum created by an opening haul of 13 points from 15, decorated with no less than 18 goals in the "For" column. So why have Rangers hit such a barren run? Well, in 3 of the 5 draws, Rangers found themselves having to play with 10 men. Whilst it's fashionable to berate the match officials, Rangers really have had a rough deal from the men in black this season and none of the red cards dished out to Stevie Notman against Stranraer (when the Black & Gold were cruising), against Mark Peat away to Shire (3 men behind him when he was deemed to be last man) and Davie Greenhill at home to Annan (two non-bookings) stand up to any kind of scrutiny. The Third Division looks like its being used by the authorities as a finishing school for wet-behind-the-ears officials this season, and Rangers have been paying a heavier price than most for that experiment. Anyone who witnessed the Duckett side linesman in the recent home draw with Queens Park will know what I'm talking about - he was utterly incapable of making a decision (throw-ins included) without waiting to see what his ref did first. Ludicrous.



Anyone who can be bothered to trawl through my away match reports in the Berwick Advertiser will know that I've been banging on since the start of the season about the size of Rangers' squad. I've been desperate to break out my "Smartarse" badge, but my prediction that the lack of numbers, and lack of quality off the bench would come back to haunt us has proved to be worryingly true. In fairness, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to work out that a skeletal squad of 19 players will be exposed at some point in the campaign, but not quite as drastically as this so early in the season. Rangers haven't been helped by a pre-season injury to skipper Stuart Callaghan, who shows no sign of an immediate return, and suspensions have also hit them hard, with more to follow as top scorer Darren Gribben continues to rack up a record number of bookings for "talking out of turn". Jimmy Crease made some excellent close season signings, but not enough of them. Gribben has been sensational up front, and with 13 goals from 11 league games is the second top scorer in Scotland. He has it all, pace, good technique, that touch of selfishness, a hint of madness and the ability to score with either foot or his noggin. He is the living definition of the word "Handful". Chris McLeod has been brilliant at the back and has formed the best centre back partnership in the league with the hugely impressive Andy McLean. McLeod's composure on the ball and his reading of the game are worthy of a bigger stage. The other influential addition to the first 11 is Craig O'Reilly, a player who is impossible to



define simply because he's like nothing else I've seen in the Black & Gold. Blessed with the touch of an angel and sublime technique, yet he finds it physically impossible to lever his substantial frame even an inch of the ground to make those simple headers. He also needs to bring some ruthlessness to his work in front of goal instead of constantly trying to play in his teammates.

The bulk of the squad is made up of the players who flattered to deceive by limping home in 6th place last season. Mark Peat remains one of the best keepers in the league, though his kicking has deteriorated; Stevie Notman is consistently excellent, though I for one remain convinced that his best position is at right back; Elliot Smith remains a model of consistency and he has the sympathies of many supporters who can't understand the seeming obsession with recruiting a new left back. On the early evidence, Steven Thompson is not the answer and doesn't give the team the same qualities that Smith brings with him; Andy McLean has got better and better and if his current rate of improvement continues he will end up playing at a higher level. Davie Greenhill has been one of the revelations of the season, testament to what a diet of raw meat and extra hours in the gym can do for you. He has metamorphosed from a lightweight fringe player into the complete

central midfielder, perfectly complementing the Third Division's version of Brian Robson in his pomp, the superb Paul Currie, whose box-to-box brilliance and goalscoring ability has been one of the season's standout features.

From there it starts to go downhill, with a couple of honourable exceptions. Ian McCaldon has shown so far that Rangers have the good fortune to be blessed with two excellent keepers, and a fit again Jamie Ewart remains an excellent, combative centre half. Of Rangers' two starting wide men, Paul McMullan has done the most to justify his continued inclusion, with match winning displays against Clyde and sporadic outbursts of top-class wing play. Fraser McLaren, on the other hand, has had a pretty disastrous season, bearing little resemblance to the player who showed such verve when he first arrived. His confidence looks shot and he has been a passenger in many recent matches - one that Rangers cannot afford to continue to carry if they have genuine title ambitions. Alan Brazil has shown signs of a return to the bullocking physicality that he brought to the team last season before being cruelly injured, but Kevin Gordon has added nothing - he's one of those players who always seems to be where the ball isn't, while Ian Little is now past his once brilliant best. Rangers need pace off the bench but what they have carries the threat of a wet sheep.



So what does my crystal ball tell me? Well, with everyone fit I'm absolutely convinced we have the best starting 11 in the league. The big problem is that that cannot be guaranteed, as recent events have shown. My guess is that if Rangers can keep touch with pacesetters Stranraer (my favourites to win the league), Albion and Annan up to the January transfer window and they bring in a couple of new players of first team quality (cover for central midfield and at least one wide player) then they will make the play offs. The league has compacted in recent weeks and every team will feel they can win the title. That makes for one of the most exciting contests in living memory. **DC**

## Supporters Trust proudly support the second string



As you may be aware our football club again elected to run a reserve team in the East of Scotland League First Division. This hopefully will prove to be a worthwhile exercise, as clubs at all levels, well most of them anyway, remain under continued fiscal restraint, and the possibility of producing that "home grown player" can make such a difference to a clubs balance sheet. You don't have to look that far back to our last reserve team when Andy McLean was "discovered" and is now a first team regular and a definite rising star.

Like the last time I felt we may be able to assist them with some form of Trust sponsorship, and like the last time, I raised at a Trust board meeting the possibility of the Trust financing the production of a match programme which they could sell at their games and that amongst other things could help them financially as well as raising their profile.

As an aside, and being a quarter ways into the season, it saddens me the number of clubs in the East of Scotland league First division that make no effort to produce such a publication, something I feel should be a pre requisite for any club taking part in an organised league structure. But I digress!

Securing the Trust boards agreement I undertook to produce a programme for each of the reserves home matches. This off course I couldn't do without the assistance of fellow board member Paul Smith who agreed, as he did that last time, to do all the designing and setting out, if that's the correct phraseology, and between the two of us, and anybody else I can rope in, we have and continue to give then a programme for each of their home games. **CP**

## EVENT A GALLOPING SUCCESS

A Race Night at The Pilot Inn early in October hosted and organised by Steven Scott (alias Spadge) raised a massive £748 towards the Trust coffers. Attended by 40 people looking for a whacky night out and braving autumnal weather; the event was a huge success providing uproarious entertainment whilst supporting fund raising efforts.

Les and Andy as usual provided the brains and tools for the job and held the event together brilliantly helped by an indispensable programme produced kindly by Shiel & Morrison Printers.

Many thanks go to Jimmy Crease for again giving up more of his spare time to come along and to all the race and horse sponsors. Spadge said "there will be another race night before the end of the season and we will be announcing the date soon".

## CORPORATE MEMBER

Stephen Green of consultant group **SG Matrix Ltd.** is pictured handing his cheque to Trust Chairman Colin Pike at a sun-filled Shielfield stadium.

Stephen has recently moved to Berwick and is keen on supporting local sport and enjoyed the home tie against Queens Park after signing membership forms. He said "when I heard about the ambitions of the Trust and how it sees the football club at the heart of the community I was more than happy to help out financially.

Times are hard at this end of the football spectrum so it is good to see a group of people working hard to help the club survive". Chairman Colin Pike welcomed Stephen to the Trust and was delighted with early success of the 1+1 campaign.

## TRUST AGM 2010

The Trust will hold it's 2010 AGM at 11.30 on Saturday 4th December (we're at home to East Stirling that day). The meeting will be held in the main function room at the Black and Gold Social Club adjacent to Shielfield, and is open to all current and prospective Trust members. If you're not already a member but would like to come along to find out more about what we do, you'll be very welcome.

We've invited manager Jimmy Crease and BRFC Chairman Brian Porteous as our guest speakers. They're both supporters of the Trust and recognise the vital role that the Trust has played in helping to secure a more stable future for Berwick Rangers. They're also happy to answer questions about the team and the club, which helps make our AGM that bit more interesting than most.

This year's meeting will feature another novelty - we'll be asking our junior section to report on their activities, and we'll also be consulting with Trust members about setting our priorities for the next 12 months.

The meeting agenda will also include the usual items such as Chairman's report, reports from the Treasurer and Membership Secretary and a Question and Answer session. Please note that this is not an election year - the current Trust Board was appointed for a two year period in February 2010.

The AGM agenda will be sent out shortly and posted on the Trust website. We look forward to seeing you on 4th December.

Don't forget, you can keep up to date with the latest Trust news via our website @ [www.berwickrangers.co.uk](http://www.berwickrangers.co.uk)

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