

# BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS TRUST

**A Time  
to Reflect**

[www.berwickrangers.org](http://www.berwickrangers.org)

**New Decade | New Goals | New Berwick Rangers**



# Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

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Here are a few things so far:-

- Renewed shirt sponsorship for Darren Smith.
- Bought one of our new players his boots to help get the deal for him to sign.
- Are paying a weekly amount to supplement one of our new young players wages, to help get agree a 2 year deal.
- Along with the Supporters Club, paid for the potential live stream profits, so that 1st game of the season would be free to all fans.
- Organising and attending the Duckets days to help with stadium maintenance.

We also still have funds available in order to assist the club and, as this year has thrown us a real curveball, happily these will be available for areas we never previously had to consider! The Trust and football club continue to be constant communication directly and through my participation on The Club Board as an Associate Director, they appreciate our funds being readily available to them, so thank you again for your support.

The lack of fans and revenue due to the pandemic restrictions has obviously put extra strain on the finances, and The Trust would like to congratulate The Club on the innovative fundraising and fan experience initiatives over the Summer with particularly thanks to the Management Team and the playing squad who have supported The Club through agreeing restrictions to their pay to help with the situation.

There is still a tremendous number of volunteers helping the club, even during these times and this is very much appreciated. From the Duckets days to matchdays and everything in-between, many Trust members and committee members have given up their time to assist and deserve all our thanks and deep appreciation.

Much of this has been in collaboration with our friends in The Supporters Club and I'm very happy indeed to report that the recent census of our members shows that you want

us to do more in these areas, with 90% of you supporting the principles of merging with The Supporters Club and creating a Joint Venture share offer to attract a significant investor to The Club. The Trust Board would like to thank all Trust Members who returned their census responses for doing so.

May I also take the opportunity to congratulate Doug Stenhouse for refreshing the 'From the Grove, to the Harrow' fanzine! I think fanzines are a wonderful part of all football clubs; I enjoyed the first issue very much indeed and look forward to the next one! To order, send an email to grovetotheharrow@gmail.com call or text 07974 137277, or on Facebook by pm to Doug.

To help pay for the printing costs Doug is asking just £2 plus £1 postage (£1.70 overseas). His Details are Paypal to grovetotheharrow@gmail.com or by card to paypal.me/ftgth. All profits will be donated to the Berwick Rangers Community Foundation.

Finally, enormous thanks to all contributors to this issue of The Trust Magazine; namely David Letham, Michael Conboy, Ron Kirk, Roy Douglas and Stuart Bell. I'm particularly grateful to Dennis McCleary who agreed to take time out from his busy role as BRFC Football Club Secretary to share his brilliant memories of, shall we say, 'characters from the past'. Just have a read; you'll love it!

Very best wishes from all on The Trust Board for Christmas and wishing you all a wonderful 2021 when it comes when we all hope things may return to some form of normality for you, your nearest and dearest and everyone involved with Berwick Rangers Football Club.

**Andrew Allan**

*Chairman*

*Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust*

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN...



Firstly, thank you for your continued support of The Trust and Berwick Rangers FC. It's been quite the year and your support is very much appreciated; it's often said, but never more true right now that

The Club needs your support now more than ever.

The pandemic has meant that representing our members and all fans of our club has been challenging; no prospect of personal interaction at games, fund-raising events; but I do hope we can perhaps see a return of some kind of Player of The Year event either

face to face or virtually. It was incredibly unjust not to be able to show our appreciation to last seasons players in the usual meaningful way. In terms of fan interaction however, we did manage some Covid compliant and socially distanced 'Ducket Days' where fans came along and spruced up Shielfield Park through much weeding, rubbing down and painting of barriers, railings and doors. My heartfelt thanks to all who grafted so hard.

The Trust Board of Gordon Dickson, Ron Kirk, Joe Crawford, Dave Spence, David Letham, Brendan Thorburn, Isla Blair and myself have been meeting by Zoom (with Stuart Lee contributing by carrier pigeon) to conduct business and I want to let you know what we've been up to!

# 50 YEARS A BERWICK RANGER

## - MY ALL TIME DREAM TEAM

by DENNIS MCCLEARY CLUB SECRETARY

I might have known on undertaking this one it was going to be tough! Where do you start and end on a half century of Black and Gold players, as you can't win!

Everyone will have their own views of course, everyone will have a different 1-11.

I had a provisional list of over 60 names on looking back and have pruned it to a 23 man World Cup style squad including subs.

I have gone with an attacking formation on a 4-3-1-2 set up so here goes.

*(Appearances listed inc as a substitute appearance)*

### GOALKEEPER:

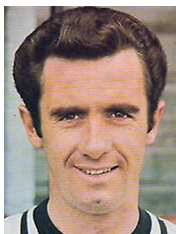
#### GARY O'CONNOR

Many great keepers but I have chosen Gary ahead of the late Murray McDermott and John Lyle. Gary is a legend at Berwick and enjoyed 4 spells at the club, deservedly winning a Championship medal in 2006/7. Initially came in from Hearts in 1992/3 and overall made 289 appearances. After last spell went to Newtongrange Star.

### BACK FOUR

#### WILLIE CALLAGHAN

Willie was brought in by Harry Melrose from his former club Dunfermline for 1972/3 and played two seasons making 54 appearances (4 goals) A former Scottish International who then moved to Cowdenbeath. Elegant full back.



#### ROY McDOWELL

Borders lad who later of course became Chairman but sadly passed away in 2019. Roy signed from Kelso United in 1970/71 and enjoyed ten seasons with us. Also had a spell in Ireland with Drogheda. A member of the 1978/9 Championship team and made 362 appearances with 7 goals.



#### DAVE SMITH

Player Manager and probably the most elegant player to wear the Black and Gold. Joined up in 1976/7 from Los Angeles Aztecs and of course a former Aberdeen and Rangers star and Scottish Cap. Came in when Berwick were rock bottom and within three seasons took them to the 1978/9 Championship with an attacking team, seeing off the likes of Dunfermline and Falkirk.

Made 180 appearances netting 12 goals. After leaving in season 1980/81 had spells at Meadowbank and Huntly.

#### GARY MORGAN

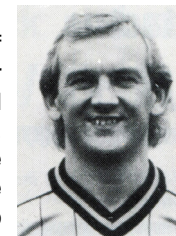
Maybe not so well known by Berwick fans but terrific left sided defender with an eye for goal, including scoring a 'humdinger' once at Dunfermline.

Joined from Northern League Consett for 1983/4 and played two seasons then joining Darlington. 77 appearances, 4 goals.

### MIDFIELD

#### PETER DAVIDSON

More a right winger of course who was scouted for Berwick by the late Nat Steel the club North East Scout. Came in from FA Vase winners Newcastle Blue Star for the championship season and was an instant hit, with his wing play and goals. Signed by Tommy Docherty for Queens Park Rangers for £40,000, sadly Peter never got a regular first team run in London and came back to Berwick for around half that fee. Played overall 251 games scoring 56 goals in his two spells here. Eventually went back to play for Newcastle Blue Star.



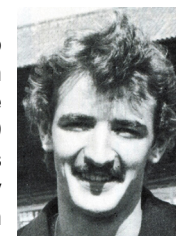
#### MARTIN NEIL

Berwick lad who had come in from then local team Shielfield Rangers in 1988/9. Tremendous football brain and key midfielder for the club. Was transferred to Dundee United but sadly his time at Tannadice never worked out and he eventually re-joined Berwick and continued to play a key role. Martin was a regular scorer too, as his 44 goals in 390 appearances shows.

When he left the club, he continued in local football for clubs including Lowick.

#### JIM MORTON

Left footed genius who was signed by Dave Smith from Brechin City in the Championship 1978/9 season and netted 20 goals that term. Forward Billy Laing had gone to Brechin from Berwick as part of the deal.



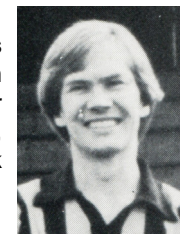
Jim was able to net some spectacular free kicks from outside the box and was the regular penalty taker as well.

Jim scored 27 goals from 64 appearances in his two seasons here and then was transferred to St Johnstone where he continued his successes.

### FORWARD/MIDFIELD

#### RODDY GEORGESON

Came in from Raith Rovers and had two spells with the club, also playing for Dunfermline and Montrose, then joining Meadowbank Thistle.



Came in originally in 1973/4 and eventually left in 1979/80. In his first spell formed a dynamic front pairing with Ian Hall.

Overall Roddy played 151 times for the club and scored a tremendous ratio of 48 goals.

### FORWARDS

#### IAN HALL

I had no hesitation in picking Ian; and remember he has pipped some top forwards including those in my subs list. Sadly taken at a young age through serious illness, Ian joined in 1971/2 from Darlington and was to be a top scorer in his three seasons at Berwick. Played in 122 games netting 56 goals! Had a spell in South Africa later for Durban City.

#### ERIC TAIT

If Ian Hall was an instant pick so too was Eric. What else with a career spanning 18 years after joining from Coldstream in 1969/70 for a pittance. If memory serves me right a couple footballs were part of deal!

Eric has played in all positions including keeper!

Eric was also Player Manager between 1982/3 and 1987/88 and was in charge for just over 200 games with more than 50% win and draw ratio.

In all honesty up front is his position wearing

the No 10 shirt. You can't see anyone passing his record in the Black and Gold!

525 all in appearances including those as a sub and 114 goals!

When Eric left the club he had a spell with local team Springhill.

On the subs bench aka a World Cup style bench!

### KEEPERS

#### **MURRAY McDERMOTT and JOHN LYLE**

Murray was a big signing in 1981/82 for reported £30,000. Made 73 appearances then went to Morton. Sadly Murray passed away in 2003 after battling serious illness. Held down at top Civil Service job in Scottish Government.

John was with Queen of South and did go back to them. Played in Cup v Rangers in 1978 here. 177 apps in 5 seasons from 1973/4

### DEFENDERS

#### **JOHN HUGHES, DAVIE MOYES, GRANT McNICOLL, CRAIG VALENTINE**

All very popular players in their time here. Yogi Hughes could also play up front and was here via Newtongrange Star for two years from 1988/89. 45 apps/15 goals. Moved to Swansea for around £80,000

Davie Moyes is Berwick through and through. Came from Preston Athletic and had two spells playing full back or in the No 4 position. 296 apps/15 goals. Championship winner 1978/79

Grant was joint skipper with Robbie Horn in the 2006/07 championship team. Great all round defender who came from Hearts in 1997/78 and was here 10 seasons overall, earning a testimonial. 295 apps/13 goals.

Craig ('Vally') came from Easthouses Boys Club in 1992/93 and despite not being the

tallest was one of the best in the air as well as on ground. 165 apps/1 goal. Moved on a tribunal with Tom Hendrie to Alloa.

### MIDFIELD

#### **DARREN SMITH, MARC ANTHONY, FRANC ESCALON, STEVIE NOTMAN**

If I may I will start with French lad Franc Escalon, one who may be a surprise but in his short spell in 1997/8 (7 games/ 2 goals) he made a huge impression. Was at Morton on trial from French team Cannes but Berwick got chance to take him as Morton had no place to offer. Instant hit on right wing, so much so Ross County paid a reported £10,000 for him! Darren Smith is back at Berwick of course as Player Coach where he started his senior career via the Youth squad in 1998/99. Since then has played for several league clubs including Brechin, Stirling, Raith and Alloa. Netted a wonder goal for Berwick in his time at Hampden v Queen's Park.

Over 220 apps and 37 goals and still counting! Marc Anthony made several first team appearances for Celtic and was a big signing for Berwick and outstanding in Scottish Cup draw with Rangers here almost 20 years ago. Signed in 1999/2000 playing 108 times with 21 goals.

Steve Notman had two spells here, one on loan from Hibs when he won a Championship medal in 2006/07. Played in the ESFL for a time then re-joined Berwick to be a valued midfielder, from Vale of Leithen FC. Has had deserved testimonial and made 313 apps/14 goals.

### FORWARDS

#### **GARY WOOD, WARREN HAWKE**

Both could easily have been in my starting XI. Gary could also play centre back but best known as a striker. Came in during 1999/2000 from Ross County then later Queen of South for a second spell. Joined Police after leaving Berwick. Made 165 apps with excellent 62 goals.

Warren was a top signing from Scarborough after initially playing for Sunderland, where he played in their FA Cup Final team. Excellent goalscoring record at Berwick after joining in 1993/94 season. Played 68 games with 22 goals then moving to Morton for a reported fee of near £100,000

Many others could easily be in squad including the likes of: *(to name but a few in no particular order!)*

Billy Bennett, Graeme Armstrong, Brian Marshall, Gareth Hutchison, Gordon Laing, Hugh McCann, Iain McLeod, Ian Cashmore, Ian Smith, John Sokoluk, Kevin Walton, Lindsay Muir, Micky Lawson, Paul Forrester, Stuart Romaines, Stuart Wheatley, Tom Davidson, Willie Irvine, Neil Oliver, Scott Sloan, Kev Haynes, Ian Little, Kevin Todd, Chris McGroarty, Robbie Horn, Darren Lavery, Darren Gribben, Alan Banks plus probably at least another 30 or 40 with sincere apologies as I can only name eleven. To be honest I need to put my hands up and say I will have missed someone but when you get to a certain age, memory cells are not what they were!

### MANAGER

I have named **HARRY MELROSE** but it could easily be any of the 23 Managers I worked with. A Manager and Secretary need to work together on trust and on confidentiality at most times. I must say all are different characters as you can imagine but I think over the years no matter who has been in charge, we got on well.

I name Harry because he brought me in to help as Assistant Secretary 50 years ago. A great organiser, meticulous in preparation pre and post-match. He became a good friend along with his wife Betty and it was a pleasure to have the family as club guests at Shielfield a couple of seasons ago.

Dennis would like to thank Alan Bell for his assistance on player statistics.

## So here is my starting XI in formation:

Goal

**GARY O'CONNOR**

Back Four

**WILLIE CALLAGHAN**

**ROY McDOWELL ©**

**DAVE SMITH**

**GARY MORGAN**

Mid Trio

**PETER DAVIDSON** *(also as striker)*

**MARTIN NEIL**

**JIM MORTON**

Midfield/Forward

**RODDY GEORGESON**

Forwards

**IAN HALL**

**ERIC TAIT**



Dennis McCleary Berwick Rangers Football Secretary at the mic

# IN THE BLOOD, A SHORT HISTORY OF A DISTANT AFFAIR

by **ROY DOUGLAS**

It was a bitter cold January day back in the mists of time, well 1972 actually when my Dad took me to catch the train to Berwick. My birthday was on the 24th and so he'd decided in his wisdom that it was time for me to be bloodied by attending my first ever live football game.

We got off the train and walked to the stadium, in those days we seemed to walk everywhere, regardless of the cold or rain. After entering through the turnstiles, we found a spot under cover in what I would learn was the Main Stand. My first impression was how big the pitch was and how muddy. The game was a blur with the opposition seeming to kick the hell out of the Berwick lads. Though that could be my natural bias influenced of course by the surrounding older fans who in my eyes must be oracles of the game, especially when telling the referee and linesman their opinions. Cowdenbeath were the losers that day 2-0 if I remember correctly.

It seemed in those days that we made annual pilgrimages to Shielfield usually around my birthday or Easter. It was funny really because my Dad followed Hull City as he had been on their reserve squad in the early '50's when Raich Carter was manager, he never played for the first team as he tore his ankle ligaments running up and down the terraces as warm up for training. Maybe because he wasn't a fan of Newcastle or Sunderland, and Berwick wore similar colours that Berwick became his second and my first team.

In the mid'70's we moved to North Yorkshire so Dad could work at Boulby Potash mine. After that trips to Berwick became pretty rare,

but when I started my apprenticeship and making a little money, I started coming up 7 or 8 times a year. During the years of "football specials" I remember having to hide my scarf under my donkey jacket from various firms on the trains. As I was usually alone, they seemed to ignore me.

During the glory years of Thatcherism and heavy industry dying a slow painful death in the north-east it was down to the smog for me, along with half a dozen of the lads from our town.

By then life as a part time Berwick fan was unrealistic the best I could do was Teletext. Then in 1987 I had the good fortune of a football scholarship to Tulane University in New Orleans. Away across the ocean I went and even though I would occasionally don my scarf especially for a night in the French Quarter it was 3-day old Sunday newspapers to catch what was happening.

After a scholarship ending injury, I decided to head out west to California settling in a small mountain town called Mammoth Lakes, and until the advent of the internet all contact with anything Berwick consisted of my weekly phone call to Dad, for all the news which by then seemed to get grimmer by the year.

I'm now settled in Reno, Nevada thanks to the internet and great sites like newblackandgolddream.com and of course the official and supporters trust websites, Twitter and Facebook I manage to keep up with all the news, buy game worn shirts, shares in the club and joined the Trust, Supporters club and Club 1881.

It's fantastic that every Saturday morning at 7am, I can get up and stream the games (thanks Covid, there's always a positive) so I don my shirt, wrap my Dream Team scarf around my neck then scream and shout at the TV, usually waking my wife up.

I appreciate the chance to share a few memories and hope that post Covid to make another pilgrimage to Shielfield with my wife tagging along too.

Finally, I'd like to take this moment to urge everyone to cherish our club and do whatever it takes to keep it afloat. Here in Reno, we had a team called Reno 1868 F.C. in the USL

Championship (Division 2 in the States) and after 4 very successful years the absentee owner decided to "cease operations". People here have gone from grief to anger to almost a riotous mob. Trust me if we could get our hands on him.....well you get the picture. So please, please, please do what it takes to keep the Dream Team alive, because if and when they go there's no return.

**Cheers everyone and have a Merry Christmas, and Prosperous Black and Gold New Year.**



# ST ANDREWS BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS

by **DAVID LETHAM**

Well what a year it has been. The season brought to a dramatic end and the restart behind closed doors. Quite the time for the



**St Andrews Berwick Rangers Supporters**

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

football club. It would appear that it did give the club a bit of a chance to reset though and some active fundraising through the summer raised some desperately needed funds. We awarded Lewis Barr with our player of the year award, second year running that we haven't had an award ceremony. The first of the two cancelled due to dropping out of league 2.

St Andrews Berwick Rangers Supporters bought £1000 of shares during the summer period to add to the funds available to Ian Little for the playing squad. We again paid for the banner in the stadium, advert in the programme and sponsoring the kit of keeper Dougie Horne. At the time of writing this we had also sponsored the Man of the match award when we played East Kilbride in October. A narrow defeat of 1-0 and man of the match awarded to Jack Cook for his defensive efforts.

We also decided to try and raise some funds for the local foodbank and northern soul kitchen. A just giving page was created and advertised on twitter and Facebook. St Andrew Berwick Rangers supporters would match up to £250. Well by lunchtime the following day £250 had been reached! Over the next couple of days, a tremendous amount was raised of £920. Very generous donations and a special thank you to Billy Swan for donating his half time draw win of £100. We also had an anonymous donation of £250 from somebody in St Andrews. The money was split between the 2 organisations. The foodbank happened to be involved in a fund matching scheme of up to £75 and gift aid was applied to this donation. The food bank therefore received £637.50.

Still always looking to help we have been active on matchdays, helping out where



possible. A couple of home games where I (David) was at Shielfield noting down the temperatures of the away teams and donating a 5L bottle of hand sanitiser to the club. This comes with the obvious advantage of being able to watch the game while there. I had to complete the sport Scotland covid training course in order to assist. A small price to pay to watch some live football.

We are doing what we can to support the club and the community. We have for a number of years with great feedback and positive results. It's great to see the club moving forward both on and off the pitch. At the time of writing this we have played 6 with 3 wins, 1 draw and 2 defeats. Both defeats being 1-0

and 1 sadly after we went down to 10 men. A huge improvement over last season already.

It's still a long way to go and we are improving but I still can't see us getting out of the Lowland league anytime soon. It is such a difficult league that is getting stronger every year. The route out doesn't help either. Having to win the league then a 2-legged playoff against the Highland league winners. This then followed by a further 2-legged playoff against the bottom of league 2. It's quite a challenge, hopes dashed even further with the lack of promotion this year and the failure of league reconstruction.

# NEW DECADE - NEW GOALS - NEW BERWICK RANGERS

by **ANDREW ALLAN**

I love this, I really do; it gives fantastic optimism for better times ahead. The right objectives, the right ideals and with the right behaviours.



*The 'after', all shiny and ready to welcome fans again...*

However, I still wonder if the objectives, ideals and behaviours are something universally subscribed to. Are we all really moving on? I've said many times that the only thing that will stand in the way of our great club stabilising, recovering and progressing meaningfully is division. That's division based on entrenched legacy bias, inability to look forward rather than back and ill-considered judgement of individuals.

Regretfully I say that as, from bitter experience, I came face to face with a most visceral example of quite awful legacy bias from an area that absolutely rocked me to my core, such was the vitriol. I have such regard for Brian Porteous and was humbled that he wanted me to join his new Board after last season; although I wondered if the past would be the past. I can say that he and the entire Club Board have absolutely done that and it's an honour and a pleasure to be part of this amazing, talented and exceptional group of forward-looking committed people. It was that which made me turn the other cheek.

As I write, one of The Club Associate Directors who has been tireless in giving his time to help The Club navigate through almost impossible Covid restrictions was trolled by 'a fan' on Facebook; then called 'a melt'. There is no doubt that all fans have the right to comment and even criticize, however I despair when a fan, and a member of The Trust, thinks that this is helpful.

When we're through the pandemic, and we're all a little more resilient to such things, perhaps such 'banter' won't hurt so deeply. Right now, we are all under unprecedent pressure, worrying about our nearest and dearest catching an unequivocally life-changing virus,



*This group passed the time creating their all-time best BRFC team; I listened and learned*

living our lives under restrictions to our social lives allowing little respite from the pressures. In these times Be Kind is a mantra I hold dear; my plea here is for us all to be as thoughtful as we can when we challenge. We're all struggling.



*Fair to say that these boys had the best music on the day!!*

In summary, reflect on the great history of The Club, but our values should be those that leave the behaviours of individual blame behind. Values that seek to unite rather than divide; together we rise, divided we fall. Moreover, if we have opinion on performance of the team, The Board or The Trust it's always welcome; no-one has a monopoly on all the answers to how The Club will progress but in these exceptional times, please be mindful of the utterly unconditional altruism of people at The Club who are volunteers. Even reflecting on the old saying; first do better then criticize. No doubt 'The Banterista' will disagree and my membership of The Snowflake Club will be in the post; or on a post...



*I'm not sure that two constitutes a parliament; statistically the hardest working.....*

I saw this recently from the excellent BBC 'View From A Terrace' team which articulates my feelings on this probably better than I have... [www.facebook.com/AViewFromTheTerrace/videos/685563838811676/](https://www.facebook.com/AViewFromTheTerrace/videos/685563838811676/)

A final reflection on an abridged quote from a JFK moment; ask not what The Club can do you for you, ask what you can do for your club.

On that theme, the accompanying photographs bring to life what some great fans did when they thought more about what they could do for their club, to help us move towards a New Decade and a New Berwick Rangers.

*A Trustworthy duo, not to mention hard grafting!*



# TRAVELLING LIGHT

by MICHAEL CONBOY

As the train sweeps round at a rapid pace from Tweedmouth on its approach to Berwick Upon Tweed via the Royal Border Bridge which spans across the River Tweed the views of The Royal Tweed Bridge followed by the Old Bridge as the river joins the sea are stunningly breath taking something you have to visit first hand to truly appreciate.

On arrival at Berwick train station you are now greeted with the refurbished concourse area with its new ticket office and waiting room. There is also a new coffee shop with a small news agent inside for all your reading needs from the Berwick Advertiser to the latest detective novel.

The automatic doors slide open and you are hit by the crisp and fresh February Berwick air. Above the carpark the Castle Hotel looks down commandingly over the train station. The Castle Hotel is where LS Lowry stayed on his visits to the town in the mid 1930's, one of his fascinations being with the Elizabethan walls that surround the town. You are in fine artistic company if you have a pint of Belhaven Best in the Castle. A perfect stop off after a reasonably long but always pleasant train journey from Leeds.

I am writing this as loose kind of travelogue with a doff of the cap to the late great Clive James as I make my way to Shielfield Park for the Edinburgh University home game last season. It was also the Berwick Rangers Football Club Community Open Day seeing a great increase in gate numbers.

I don't proclaim to be a historian or a travel expert but I am going to try and give you some ideas and hopefully inspirations of some of my favourite places and parts in Berwick to date, there are still loads of places and things I want to do one being the full Lowry Trail, a coffee and a browse through the records in

the Mule On Rouge on Bridge Street and a beer in the new beer shop and bar Hop and Bottle" opposite the Kings Arms Hotel which is also where I am staying for the night on this football trip. A colleague at work whose daughter used to live in Berwick and work in the Brown Bear before it was renovated stayed there for his 60th Birthday and advised me it was haunted. I did hear some strange noises through the night but put it down to either the heating system, the floorboards in the corridors or my stomach after a 3 course Indian meal in the Magna Tandoori followed by a Stout night cap in the Curfew, let's just say the short walk back to the Kings Arms took slightly longer than usual.

As I finish my Bell Haven Best in the Castle Hotel, I make my way with plenty of time down to the High Street on a cold February lunchtime. After a short walk I reach Scots Gate built in 1560 and was the gate out of town on the road to Scotland. You can also turn right here and follow the path to Megs Mount the bastion protecting the South West corner of town, there are some lovely views of the bridges and the river Tweed if you carefully amble down to the river side, there are some rather precarious steps though. When you eventually reach the bottom there is some not so historical spray painting of "HIBS" under the bridge, one would have to assume done by an out of townner!

I stay on the main street though and call into the Free Trade Inn which is a small traditional pub with a wooden screen separating the tap room off, there is an unusual wishing well in the men's urinals. I say wishing well it's just loose change in the bottom of the trough. The pub is full of Rugby fans so I have another quick Bell Haven Best, nip for a wee (sorry to much information) sling 20 pence into the urinal wishing well and make a wish that

Berwick Rangers take all three points at 3pm.

My next stop is the wonderful Curfew on Bridge Street, as I make my way down the High Street with the tall Georgian Town Hall building dominating my eye line the snow begins to fall. Turning right at the bottom of the High Street down the steep hill to Bridge Street the snow starts to ease off and the sun pops its head out.

I have fond memories of a visit to the "Slightly Foxed" bookshop on Bridge Street. The owners friendly Labrador greeted us on arrival, it's like Aladdin's cave in there books everywhere on every subject imaginable. If you walk through to the back there are Chesterfield chairs and a sofa for you to relax on or pick up a book and have a browse through while the low volume of music from one of the stunningly restored radiograms hums along in the background. If your senses can cope, I would recommend looking up from whatever book you have chosen and feast you're eyes on the marvel of the hand painted domed ceiling above you, you leave the shop with your breath truly taken away.

I head past the Slightly Foxed this time and arrive at the Curfew with just enough time for a drink before heading up to Shielfield Park. There and fellow Black and Gold supporters in with their colours on show, the pre match tension and anticipation can be felt around the busy bar. Once at the bar my eye catches the black and silver can of the elusive Magic Rock Dark Arts Stout which is definitely one of my favourite stouts along with Gathering Storm which is a dark traditional stout from Leeds Brewery which I have sampled on many occasion at Brewery Tap near Leeds train station and Midnight Bell in Holbeck Leeds a stones through from the canal.

The Dark Arts Stout never fails to get the taste buds tingling, but the sun is shining so it's a good time to make my way to the football ground, past the Barrels pub and over the old bridge to the other side of the Tweed I take

some time to take in the views looking back across the river and they are stunning with the sun in the back ground, no one would have thought it was snowing 30 minutes earlier.

I walk on the low side past the harbour on Dock Road, loosing my bearings slightly but I finally reappear near the Angel Inn. The sky darkens suddenly and looks threatening, I really do need to get to the football ground now. Unfortunately, halfway up the main road the snow begins to fall yet again but in a matter of minutes it's a blizzard. Woolly hat on and jacket zipped up I tuck my chin into it put my head down and pick the pace up. I arrive just about in one piece, pay my money at the turnstiles, there is a certain buzz around the place and more families around than usual. I always have to visit the club shop, programme and team sheet purchased. I also buy a BRFC bobble hat as my woolly hat is now covered in snow, soaking wet and no use at all. I swap over hats and warm up ever so slightly. A smiling face of a fellow supporter looks at me and asks if I have come from the Antarctic?? I reply with a grin or is it a grimace "no, Leeds" for that brief cold moment the humour was lost on me.

Making a bee line for the Pop-Up bar which is situated at the top of the main stand I get a well-deserved pint just as the whistle blows for the first half to commence. I am pleasantly surprised to be joined in the small concrete bar area by one of the new directors of the football club Dave Buglass who discusses his vision for the club going forward and how pleased he is with the turn out in such bad weather for the Community Day. I eventually just about thaw out and Berwick win 2 nil so a great day all round!

Its now September 2020 as I write this and the Lowland League fixtures have been published, the Gers have played a number of preseason friendlies which have included some of the exciting new player signings they have secured during the break. The standout games being the 1-3 win against Whitehill



Welfare and the 7-0 win against Tweedmouth Rangers, so things are looking promising for the season ahead.

Grassroots football faces an uncertain future in the current climate with no supporters being allowed into the grounds, so I would urge and encourage any supporters who would normally pay at the gate on a Saturday afternoon to join the 1881 Club, this gives the

football club a regular income stream which allows them to future forecast and enhance the match day experience for all involved and ultimately keep this great football club functioning, its not just about the results at 5pm on a Saturday the club provides so much more to the community as a whole and brings people together.

# IMAGES OF THE SEASON SO FAR

*Thanks to Ian Runciman for the photography*



*Calum Smith shows Ricky Miller a clean pair of heels*



*Inspiring words from the gaffer*



*Tracy Donnachie & Andy Thorpe have given a shot in the arm for the club and the community*

# IT'S LIFE JIM BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

by **RON KIRK**

At the end of my Lowland League Misadventures article for the last newsletter, I speculated what might happen to the management team if they failed to meet the targets I understand that had been set by the Board following the 5-1 home defeat to East Stirling in February. I also pondered what the quality of the playing squad was likely to be for this season given that it was no secret that Rangers would be operating on a greatly reduced playing budget. Little did I know then what was about to happen to all of our normal everyday lives. The freedoms and privileges that we all take for granted all suddenly became somewhat restricted and life still hasn't returned to what it was before 23 March.



*Jordan Sinclair's brilliant free kick is netbound*

As we all know, the global Covid-19 epidemic struck and on 23 March the government placed the country in lockdown meaning that we all had to stay at home and not go out unless it was for essential shopping, medical supplies or for exercise. Queuing to get into supermarkets and one way systems therein became the norm. The wearing of face masks, social distancing, hand sanitising, working from home and Zoom and Microsoft team meetings have become a way of life. I suspect that some of these are likely to remain for sometime to come even after we have eventually got on top of this dreadful virus. In

addition to all of that, all sport at every level was stopped and theatres, cinemas, pubs and restaurants were all closed and nothing as yet has returned to normal.

What all of this meant for Rangers was that the last competitive action of the season came in the home game against Edinburgh University on 22 February when Rangers laboured to a 2-0 win with two late goals. The game featured on BBC Scotland's View to a Terrace programme where a number of weel kent faces from the ducklet featured. Football along with all other sports was left in limbo with annual sporting events such as the Grand National, Wimbledon and the Open golf championship along with Euro 2020 all being cancelled. The powers that be decided eventually that it was not going to be possible to finish the season with Kelty Hearts being declared champions. It was perhaps tough on Robbie Horn's Bonnyrigg Rose side who were still in with a shout of pipping Kelty to the title but Kelty also ultimately lost out with when the pyramid play off was scrapped denying them the opportunity to win promotion to SPFL2. The curtailment of the season meant that Rangers finished in a disappointing 12th place.

During the lockdown, the new board continued its good work off the pitch, reconnecting lost links with the local community and generally gaining a lot of good PR with their work. In particular, the decision to continue to pay the players for the remainder of their contracts gained the club a number of plaudits at national level including from former Scotland goalkeeper Rab Douglas who applauded the club for its stance.

As the summer progressed, the board signed the management team up on extended two year contracts on reduced terms which at least answered the first of the questions I had pondered at the end of my last article. Elsewhere, the Premier League in England resumed behind closed doors with an increased number of matches being shown on free to view television with the bizarre concept of artificial crowd noise being added. Liverpool eventually wrapped up their first Premier League title bringing to an end their 30 year wait. They were presented with the trophy on an empty Kop rather than in front of a packed one in full celebration mode. Other sports also gradually returned either behind closed doors or with limited crowds. The French Open tennis was played in September with limited crowds allowed and as I conclude this article the US Masters golf tournament is taking place and Scotland, would you believe, have just qualified for a major tournament finals for the first time in what seems like 100 years.

Anyway, back to the Rangers and my concern that the greatly reduced playing budget may impact on the quality of player the club would be able to attract. Thankfully, my fears have proved to be unfounded. Firstly, the better players from last season's squad signed on again despite, I understand, interest from other clubs. In addition, Rangers have been able to bring in players of the calibre of Ryan Finnie, Jordan Sinclair, Grant Nelson and Lewis Allan. Dougie Horne also looks as assured a goalkeeper as the Rangers have had for some time.

It was eventually agreed that the Lowland League season could kick off in October albeit behind closed doors. This has led to fans having to catch the action by way of live streams which is another new way of life. As I conclude this article, Rangers have played 8 fixtures and have been more than competitive in them all. They currently sit in eighth place with 13 points which is only six points off the top. They were extremely unlucky to lose to

late goals at Spartans and at home to the early pacesetters, big spending East Kilbride and their expensively assembled squad of players from the higher divisions of the SPFL. Memorable moments so far have been Jordan Sinclair's howitzer of a free kick on the opening day against Vale of Leithen which won the Lowland League goal of the month and the late comeback against Stirling University



*Dougie Horn is assured under another high ball*

when two goals in the last five minutes turned a potential 2-1 loss into a 3-2 win.

So, what are the prospects for the rest of the season? I think that we all accept that Rangers are a work in progress and that they will not challenge for the league title. Rangers simply cannot compete at this stage with the financial muscle being flexed by East Kilbride, Kelty Hearts, East Stirling and BSC Glasgow. In addition, as we know, Bonnyrigg Rose have a squad full of SPFL experience as do also Lowland league new boys Boness United. All of that means that a place in the top six is likely to be difficult to achieve. That said, I see no reason why Rangers cannot aim to be the best of the rest whilst hopefully sustaining a challenge to break into the top six. That for me would represent a successful season given the club's position both on and off the pitch at the curtailment of last season.

Hopefully, the scientists can find a cure to this dreadful virus before the end of this year and that in the new year we can look forward to getting back to cheering on the Rangers from the terraces again rather than from our sofa's. As the lyric from the star trekking song goes "It's life Jim but not as we know it".

# REDCAR REFLECTIONS

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 Docket 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 Docket, 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.



*Ryan Finnie has looked outstanding*

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.



Jack Wright has surprised and excelled

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 still 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.

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

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.

# OBITUARY - STEVIE SWERYDA

All of us at The Trust were saddened to hear of Stevie’s recent passing.

An extremely popular figure on matchdays, ever present selling 50:50 tickets for The Supporters Club, chatting to our guests upstairs and making them feel welcome.

A long-term Trust member, we’ve always been warmed that, every year, Stevie would seek out one of The Trust Board, typically before the previous season had ended, to settle his subscription for the following season. This season was no different.

Our deepest condolences to Stevie’s family and friends; he will be missed by all at The Football Club.

We would also like to offer our thoughts and prayers to families and friends of Berwick Rangers Supporters all over the world who have passed this year.



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