

BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS TRUST



Thank you Brian
for all your hard work



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Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

Magazine No. 40
February 2023



Address:

Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust
Berwick Rangers Football Club
Shielfield Park, Tweedmouth
Berwick-upon-Tweed
TD15 2EF

Telephone: 01289 307424

E-Mail:

trust@berwickrangers.org



fb.com/berwickrangerstrust



twitter.com/berwickrst

Chairman:

Linda Buchanan

Vice-Chairman:

Secretary:

Joe Crawford

Treasurer:

Andrew Allan

Membership Secretary:

Joe Crawford

Media Manager:

Linda Buchanan

Andrew Allan

Editor:

David Letham

Committee Members:

Andrew Allan

Jenna Shields

Graeme Tait

Jeffrey Roy

Glyn Farrer

Ruaraidh Ferguson

Linda Buchanan

Joe Crawford

Designed &

Published by:

InHouse Design

Photography:

Ian Runciman

a fantastic supporter of The Trust (and me), working so hard on so many initiatives: thank you David.

This will be the last magazine for me as Chair, so I'm particularly thrilled by the depth and quality of contributions, my thanks to you all; this is a stellar collection from a stellar group of wonderful people, I hope you agree and enjoy reading them as much as I have.

Linda introduces herself in this edition of the magazine and talks a wee bit about herself; I hope you will support Linda as readily and fully as you all have supported me.

Andrew Allan

Chairman, Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

FOOT NOTE: For queries or comments about this magazine or to offer contributions for future editions, please e-mail trust@berwickrangers.org

FROM THE CHAIRMAN...



May I begin with saying how very pleased indeed I am to welcome Linda Buchanan into the Chair at The Trust, which will be ratified at our AGM on 18th February. Linda will bring new drive to The Trust Board and will, as she is already proving, provide much needed impetus to The Trust's fundraising activities and improve our value to The Football Club and our members.

Since our last edition, The Trust has been active in supporting The Football Club and

our community in a number of ways, including camera repairs to ensure continuity in our match coverage for our supporters, funding an electronic card payment device for the turnstiles improving supporter experience, supplementing the player acquisition budget and providing water bottles for the brilliant Berwick Rangers Wildcats.

Although I'll stick around as Treasurer for The Trust, I want to thank all the Board Members who've worked with me over my term as Chair, particularly Dave Spence who we so tragically lost last year, my irreplaceable predecessor, Michael Smyth and Gordon Dickson, who stands down as Vice Chair at AGM after joining The Trust Board in the late 80's. David Letham is also standing down; he has been



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MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CHAIR OF THE SUPPORTERS TRUST

Hi guys, I would like to introduce myself, I'm Linda Buchanan, The new Chair of the Supporters Trust. Firstly, can I start by saying a massive thanks to Andrew Allan for his help and support as chair and as treasurer over the last few years. Good luck in your future endeavours and I look forward to seeing you around Shielfield Park. I'm excited and looking forward to contributing to the Trust and the football club over the coming seasons.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their ongoing support of the dream team and the Supporters Trust. I look forward to working with the football club and the supporters club and would like to thank Brian Porteous for his work over the last few seasons as club chairman. I would like to welcome new chairman Kevin Dixon and wish him all the best from the Trust, and I look forward to working with him and supporting him as chairman of the football club.

Some of you might know that I'm a Falkirk

bairn at heart. I was born in Falkirk, so I've followed Falkirk, Stenhousemuir and East Stirlingshire in my time. Berwick is where my loyalty lies now, having moved to Berwick in 1996 and discovering Berwick Rangers (Dream team) I never looked back.

I work part time at Morrisons in Berwick and volunteer for the Great North Air Ambulance service. The Air ambulance provide services across the North-East, Cumbria and North Yorkshire and are entirely funded by charity. They are a crucial organisation in an area like Berwick. I was particularly excited to meet the Manager Stuart Malcom and my namesake Liam Buchanan and to have my picture taken with them. We have a good squad of players, and they are such nice guys. The season so far has been a rocky road but hopefully we can turn the corner and get the club moving in the right direction.

All the best, Linda.



I CAN TAKE THE DESPAIR, IT'S THE HOPE I CAN'T STAND

by **STUART BELL**

My visits to Fortress Shielfield this season have been more sporadic than usual, thanks to postponements, strikes and engineering works. Battling my way north, occasionally became more of an expedition than a leisurely day out. I'm still traumatised by a gruesome adventure on Go North- East's "express" bus (if I knew how to, I'd insert a laugh emoji), from Middlesbrough to Newcastle. It started 20 minutes late, picked up much of the



population of Teesside, then embarked on a magical mystery tour of County Durham by the rookie driver, including a 30-minute dash the wrong way down the A19. Arriving at a gridlocked Newcastle 100 minutes late, Eric Tait gave me a lift North, where I fell gratefully into The Curfew in a similar way to how I imagine Amundsen arrived at the South Pole. The journey home was considerably worse, Sir Eric did his bit OK, but this time the bus was 90 minutes late setting off and the queue snaked half way around Eldon Square. A bladder-busting journey to Middlesbrough, then the last bus to Redcar, meant that it took me 4 hours and 55 minutes to get home. If Eric had dropped me at Newcastle Airport, I

could have been in Crete by then. I might as well have swum it.

Now, there is much to talk about. I believe we have a decent squad – as good as any in the league – but despite the occasional impressive display, the team has seriously underperformed. We've had a lot of unfortunate injuries, but that doesn't explain some of the many abject displays and I concluded some time ago that either the players weren't as good as I thought, or that the Management team wasn't getting the best out of them. I concluded that the latter was true and now wish I'd kept my thoughts to myself as I daren't look Stu Malcolm in the face.

We've had further Boardroom upheavals, social media meltdowns/disappearance and a growing apathy on the terraces and I reckon it was all summed up by my trip up to see us beat Gala on New Year's Eve. So, I'll just run you through that!

It started the day before as I considered my train journey North. There were no strikes planned, but there were plenty of engineering works and LNER had deemed it mandatory to have a seat reservation for each train. The early kick-off meant an early train, but that became even earlier when I awoke to find that my booked train had been cancelled due to "staff shortages" (drivers signing off sick so they could go out on the New Year's Eve lash). So a mad dash, a taxi and a local train got me to Darlington for 8.55 am, whereupon I received a message from the exceptionally wonderful Dennis McLeary to tell me that he'd been out walking his dog, and could confirm that the pitch was OK and the match was on. My train was empty – I think many people

have given up on them – and at Newcastle I was joined again by the legend (Mr. Tait). Eric, as many of you will know always looks the part on a match day and has a silver tongue to match his hair. Not for the first time he used his skills to good effect as he blagged us into an empty first class carriage and we enjoyed a good natter and a free coffee as we sped through a soggy Northumberland.

We talked about the prospective Boardroom changes - how things have swung up and down since the days of John Bell and Colin Pike. Now, these thoughts are my own - I won't betray any of Eric's - but it felt to me like we'd ascended a ladder or two when Dave Buglass and Craig Forsyth were bigging the club up during the Covid lockdown. Their regular online and Zoom appearances were refreshing and with robust fundraising I think many of us felt quite proud of the club again. Dare I even use the word 'Positive'. Every ladder seems to have a snake though and our current position in the Lowland League really doesn't reflect that optimism.

Messrs Forsyth and Buglass have receded into the background and soon it seems likely that we will have a new man at the helm – local builder Kevin Dixon – just as more of the old guard retreat to their allotments. Additional thoughts on that later.

I enjoyed a snorting breakfast at Sinners café – a snip at a fiver – discovering that this was the last day of operation. Along with many other struggling business owners, they had watched operating costs crash through the ceiling as income began to sink through the floor, and had concluded that it really wasn't worth the effort and risk.

This game would be the first in my 45th year of watching Berwick Rangers. Maybe memory is always a tad rose coloured, but I mused that back in the day my trains were never cancelled (indeed they ran more frequently and I could get to the likes of Arbroath and still get home before Match of the Day, whereas

now it's a relief to fit in a home game). The town had over 30 pubs then (though the beer was shite), we played in the 2nd tier of Scottish football with crowds twice as big, there were no empty shops, pies were gleefully deep-fried, it used to snow but we played anyway, Love Island hadn't been dreamed up by some vacuous twat in that there London, and some acts in them there pop-charts could actually sing and play musical instruments.

What had really changed for the worse though is the plight of people trying to run a small business – such as Sinners. There is just as much money around now, but a hugely greater proportion of it has been trousered by men in shiny suits, sailing around the Caribbean in their shiny yachts and issuing missives back home from their shiny heads that the plebs should work harder and longer as they collectively swivel, because it is all their fault. Pretty soon, it will all go off with a loud bang.

Shall we get back to Berwick Rangers? Aw, OK.



I had a quick walk down the pier where the world was walking its dogs, then at the crack of noon, adjourned to The Curfew. Many of the regulars were giving this a miss for the same reason as those train drivers, but there were enough fans in there to have a healthy discussion on where the club was headed. The general consensus seems to be that

the Lowland League is likely to be where we will stay. There are so many good little clubs around (Auchinleck, Darvel, Pollok, Linlithgow, Brechin, Spartans, Tranent, etc etc) that we could even be an East of Scotland outfit within 5 years. Kind of sad, but you can't hide from the fact that we have no reason - other than history - to think of ourselves as more deserving than those I've mentioned. However, if you add in Musselbrough, Penicuik, Strollers, East Kilbride and a few others, that is an entire league of teams that is potentially better than SPFL 2. On the one hand, that will make the football a better watch, though it will also make success on the pitch even more difficult. Indisputable though is that the case for reconstruction of the SPFL and the lower leagues is smack-you-in-the-face obvious and that the presence of 'B' teams in this division is absolute bollocks.

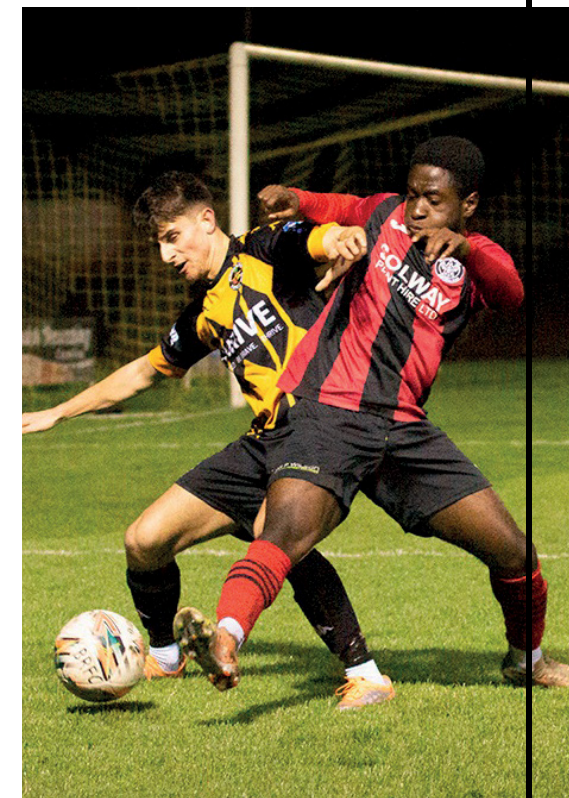
For us, in the short term, it will need money to attract decent players and nobody believes that Kevin Dixon (or Craig Forsyth if he has another renaissance) will bring a large chequebook with them. The fear with Kevin is that he may believe that we have already peaked and that success in the EoS is preferable to mid-table in the Lowland League. We shall wait and we shall see.

Over to Shielfield, courtesy of Pedro's taxis. A healthy crowd approaching 400 saw us thrash Gala Fairydean 2-1. No - honest! I thought we should have won by 5 or 6! We had so many good chances to put the game to bed early doors, but managed to hit defenders and their keeper when it seemed easier to score. They scored first though with a shot that swerved round like a North Korean firework, but the one man in our team who really knows where the net is – Liam Buchanan – soon levelled with a penalty rebound, and a trademark Travis header from a corner secured the points. We shouldn't have been hanging on at the end, but nerves did become a little shredded courtesy of a bizarre cameo from Griff Sabatini who produced one mesmerising bit of silky skill, but otherwise his series of crap passes and threepenny-bit deflections

gave Grant Nelson far more problems at right-back than the Gala winger did.

As I write, we have won again at home to high-flying Tranent with a sterling performance on a pudding of a pitch. It makes some of our earlier results all the more frustrating, but we've now won 4 from 5 and there is no doubt that this team can play. Was Kev Dixon there to see these victories? Can he be persuaded that just a few additions might - just might – give us a fighting chance of success next season?

As John Cleese once said, "It's not the despair ... I can take the despair. It's the hope I can't stand"



OVER THE WALL

by MICHAEL SMYTH

With a raft of postponements due to December's weather the first half of the 2022/23 East of Scotland League season spluttered to a close. Games off meant that Tweedmouth Rangers finished one game

5-1 win at Lochgelly Albert on Tweedmouth's first ever visit to Purvis Park and, thanks to his knee, went one better when the League's other 'Albert', Hawick, were beaten 4-1, also away from home.

Other new destinations were Lochore Welfare's Central Park and Stenhousemuir's Ochilview. Not to play 'Stenny' of course but ground sharing, high flying Syngenta.

As predicted in the last issue of this magazine, Syngenta and Whitburn, who came up from what was Conference 'X', have emerged as favourites for promotion ending the year in first and second place respectively. Tweedmouth lost at home to both but against each 'drew' one half of the game, 1-1 versus Whitburn, who eventually won 5-1, and 0-0 against Syngenta after trailing by four goals at the interval. In contrast to Tweedmouth's predominantly local squad, there wasn't a single 'Whitburnian' in the West Lothian club's line up when the teams met in mid August.

Ochilview is a perfect venue for lower division SPFL matches but with barely fifty people watching Tweedmouth's return fixture with Syngenta there was a soulless feel to the



short of completing exactly half of their Division Two programme. Ignoring a negative goal difference, the 16 matches played left them with a 50% record and ninth spot in the 18 team table with seven wins, two draws and seven defeats.

At the start of the season, Stephen Lennon came in as assistant manager to Neil Oliver thus renewing a partnership which in season 2011-12 took then East of Scotland members Duns to the final of the South Challenge Cup. Probably the best of those seven victories under the new pairing was the 3-1 home success over Arniston Rangers, an almost exact reversal of last season's meeting between the teams on Old Shielfield when the visiting Rangers won 3-0.

Michael Robinson bagged a hat trick in a

place on a cold, windy November afternoon as the visitors went down 5-1. Tweedmouth were definitely at fault for two of the five but, on the other hand, Syngenta's overall display was the best Rangers came up against in any competition in the first half of the season.



The following week, the team made the long trip to meet St Andrews United in what turned out to be their final game of 2022. Last season, the Berwick lads completed a League double over Saints but, despite contributing to an entertaining game, were probably lucky to leave the eastern edge of Fife with only a 3-0 defeat. Under a new chairman, St Andrews have rebuilt and could well be one of the three clubs which go up at season's end. They are well placed geographically to recruit not only from Fife but from across the Tay in Dundee and Angus. Their line up in December's game included several players who had been with SPFL clubs such as Alloa and Peterhead.

Tweedmouth's published home attendances are based on headcounts. The highest tally so far this season came in the South Challenge Cup tie with Division One Dunbar United. The paying spectators got their money's worth as, three nil down at one point, Rangers pulled back two goals but were unable to take the tie

to extra time.

The less said about the East Qualifying Cup clash at home to Edinburgh South, the better. Suffice to say, that South, now sharing Paties Road Stadium with Edinburgh United, were 5-4 winners.

The Alex Jack Cup for EoSL clubs not eligible for the Scottish Cup proved the most fruitful for the Old Shielfield club. A First Round bye was followed by a trip to Whitestone Park to meet Peebles Rovers. It wasn't just the warm, sunny August weather which produced smiles, so did the outcome, a 3-1 victory. Curiously, Peebles' keeper didn't make a single save all match which proved that Tweedmouth took their chances which has not always been the case. Reward for beating Peebles was a second trip to Fife in three weeks where Division One Lochore ran out 4-2 winners but, ultimately, the trophy was won by another team from the same section, Perthshire club, Luncarty.

Some might consider it a tad unambitious but Tweedmouth's main aim this season is to avoid relegation to Division Three. In spite of the loss of a couple of key players to long term injuries, the 23 points amassed before the New Year was their best haul yet as an EoSL club and though they added another three as they began 2023 with a 4-0 home win over Easthouses there can be no complacency in a division where around two thirds of the teams seem capable of beating each other. At the end of the season, four clubs are expected to go down as the League looks to balance the current sixty teams across four roughly similar sized divisions.

As for the other Border clubs in the League, Vale of Leithen are doing it tough after relegation from the Lowland league. The three points gained from their only Premier Division win of 2022 were taken away for fielding an ineligible player, a situation leading to three other clubs being deducted three points, two of them, Stirling University and Edinburgh

United in Tweedmouth's division. Nothing of course compared to the misfortune of Highland League new boys Banks O' Dee. The Aberdeen club was stripped of a whopping

24 points for on eight occasions including a person(s) who shouldn't have been playing.

Tweedmouth's nearest neighbours Coldstream are in the bottom half of a Division One which coach Kev Wright, who left Tweedmouth last season, also describes as one

in which there is not really much difference in the strength of a good number of sides. If the Berwickshire club continue to pick up points at the same rate in the New Year, they should be able to beat the drop. Probably their outstanding result in part one of 2022/23 was

an extra time 2-1 home victory over strong Premier Division outfit Penicuik Athletic in the East of Scotland Qualifying Cup.



In Rangers' part of the League, despite the earlier Cup result, Peebles, close to Tweedmouth in the table, are likely to prove hard to beat both home and away. Having dissolved their merger with Border Amateur League Hawick United, it's back to the old three word name at Albert Park. But with only four

points gathered, all from draws, Hawick Royal Albert sat at the bottom of Division Two at the end of 2022. They started 2023 by taking a fifth point from another draw, this one away to Stirling University.

THOUGHTS AND RAMBLINGS

by DAVID LETHAM

Well, it's been a difficult season so far. My hopes of a top 4 finish have gone. The team have had quite a few injuries that have really hampered consistency and team selection. Some disastrous cup results have added to the disappointment. I don't stand with the



opinion that some of the cups are "tin pot" or "Mickey Mouse". Like it or not we are a Lowland league team and if we want to be better, show ourselves to be better, then we need to compete. We shouldn't be getting beat by Linlithgow Rose and Stoneyburn. Perhaps one of these team would be an upset, but two is rather embarrassing. We have been on rather poor cup form for several years now. I guess it must be something in the water. We still have the lowland league cup to go, perhaps we can achieve something there. It's good for the fans and the players if the club wins a trophy, it gives a sense of achievement and progress.

struggling and Cowdenbeath are struggling as well. Brechin are managing well in the Highland league, but that doesn't seem to be as competitive as the Lowland league. The pyramid review that was dangled in front of the lowland league to allow 3 B teams entry this season seems to have vanished. It might reappear at the end of the season, but I imagine anything that was put to a vote that would involve change will be voted down.

I will be stepping down from the supporters Trust this year. I have other commitments that require more of my attention. I hope I will leave the Trust in a better position than when I joined. I have been membership secretary, social media manager, website manager and magazine editor in my spell at the Trust. I have documented all that is required in each role so it should be easier when somebody else takes over the duties. Andrew Allan will be stepping down as chair, it has been a great pleasure working with Andrew and his work at the Trust has been greatly appreciated. Linda who is taking over as chair has my full



Brian Porteous will be stepping down as Chairman of the club, Kevin Dixon will be moving over from Tweedmouth Rangers to replace him. I wish Kevin all the best, it's not an easy task running a football club, especially a club like Berwick Rangers. We have the running costs of a league 2 club but in a league that has no money attached to it. There is no prize money for winning the league, never mind a pot of cash shared down the league placings. The league is getting more competitive, and I feel we could struggle to progress. It's harder for a club coming down than it is for a club going up. East Stirling are

support and I wish her all the best in her new role. I will still offer my service to the football club to contribute in whatever way I can. This season it has been mostly managing the turnstiles and assisting with the Christmas toy drive. I also spent 2 days at Shielfield undertaking pitch repairs during the festive period. That pitch is much bigger when you are standing on it in the freezing cold than it looks from the stand. I'll wait to see how things develop with Kevin Dixon, the new club chairman and what other contributions I may be able to make to the club. Thank you all, David.



WHAT BERWICK PLAYERS WENT ON TO PLAY AT A HIGHER LEVEL?

It was a question posed to me and I sought some advice on the grove to the Harrow Facebook page.

Here are a few of the players mentioned, it is by no means an exhaustive list, and it is in no particular order. If there are any other players you wish to be featured in a future article please email trust@berwickranges.org.

Michael McKenna

Born in Edinburgh, McKenna spent time in Hibernian's youth academy before joining Musselburgh Athletic in 2012. In the summer of 2014, McKenna signed for Scottish Championship side Livingston on a one-year contract. In summer 2015, McKenna joined Berwick Rangers. McKenna signed for Arbroath for an undisclosed fee in January 2018 and is still with the club playing in the Scottish Championship.



David Gold

David was with Berwick from 2014–2015 making 30 appearances. He moved to Arbroath in 2015 where he is still a current player in the Scottish Championship.



Danny Swanson

Swanson started his career at Scottish Third Division side Berwick Rangers before moving to Scottish Premier League club Dundee United in 2008. He moved to England in 2012 to play for Peterborough United. After two years

with Peterborough he signed for Coventry City, but he then moved back to Scotland on loan at St Johnstone. Swanson was released by Coventry in September 2015 and then signed for Heart of Midlothian, where he spent five months before returning to St Johnstone. Swanson then had a spell with Hibernian.



John Hughes

Hughes played primarily as a central defender for several clubs, including Falkirk (two spells), Celtic, Hibernian and Ayr United. Towards the end of his playing career, Hughes took on coaching responsibilities, and was appointed manager of Falkirk in 2003 (initially as co-manager with Owen Coyle). Hughes guided the club to promotion to the Scottish Premier League and a Scottish Cup Final during his time in charge. He eventually left Falkirk to take up the managerial role at Hibernian in 2009 but left by mutual consent after sixteen months.



Hughes was appointed manager of Livingston in February 2012 but left in November to take over at English club Hartlepool United. He departed Hartlepool in May 2013 after being unable to prevent their relegation to League Two. Hughes was appointed manager of Inverness Caledonian Thistle in December 2013. He led the club to their first major silverware with the Scottish Cup in May 2015, and their first foray into European football, before he left in May 2016. Hughes then had

a brief stint with Raith Rovers, which ended in them being relegated to Scottish League One. His next spell as a manager was with Ross County, where he managed to help them avoid relegation. Hughes was appointed Dunfermline Athletic manager in November 2021, but he resigned from this position in May 2022 following their relegation.

Martin Neil

Signed from Shielfield Rangers in 1988, Martin became a regular with Berwick Rangers, playing with them in a Scottish Cup tie at Tannadice in January 1992.



A few weeks later he joined Dundee United for trials and signed for £25,000 at the end of March. He travelled with the squad to the invitation Guinness Gold Cup tournament in Canada, playing against Vancouver Island All Stars. He played in one more friendly for United, spending the rest of his time at Tannadice in the reserves before returning to Berwick Rangers in March 1993 without having made a first team appearance with United.

He remained at Berwick for the rest of his career, helping them win promotion to the Second Division in 2000, and retired in 2005.

Mark Scott Sloan

"Scotty Sloan" played as a striker for Berwick from 1998 to 1990 before moving to Newcastle United where he made 16 appearances from 1990 to 1991. He then moved to Falkirk from 1991 to 1994 where he made 64 appearances during his spell there. He then played for Cambridge United, Hartlepool and Kalamar FF before returning to Shielfield for one final spell in the 1996-97 season making 1 appearance for the club.



Neil Oliver

Neil played for Berwick Rangers (1985 to 1989), Blackburn Rovers (1989 to 1991), Falkirk (1991 to 1999 making 170 appearances), Hamilton Academical (1998 to 1999), Berwick Rangers (1999 to 2001) then moving on to Clydebank, and East Fife.



Peter Davidson

Newcastle born Peter joined us for his first spell in 1977 from Newcastle Blue Star, staying until 1979, before heading south to join Tommy Docherty at Queens Park Rangers. He stayed for less than one season making one solitary appearance in West London before returning in 1980, this time staying until 1986. In total he made 215 appearances netting 45 goals, after which he returned to Newcastle Blue Star.



Warren Hawke

Warren Hawke (born 20 September 1970) played for Sunderland, Berwick Rangers and Greenock Morton and is a cult hero to Sunderland fans, for being in the team that made it to Wembley for the FA Cup final and to beat Newcastle in the play-off final. He is also fondly remembered by Berwick fans and Morton fans who nicknamed him "The Legend". In a career that spanned six other clubs Warren clocked up 369 appearances scoring 83 goals.



Paul Currie

Currie joined Berwick Rangers in 2009, making his debut on 19 September against Elgin City scoring Berwick's second goal in their 3–3 draw. In all he made



75 appearances in all competitions scoring 23 goals for the club. On 31 August 2011 Currie signed for Hamilton Academical after the second of two offers was accepted by Berwick. He made his debut on 10 September against Queen of the South at Palmerston Park. His first goal for the club came on 15 October against Morton in their 2–0 win, going on to score from the spot against Ayr United on 29 October.

Dylan Easton

Dylan was in the Berwick team in season 2013 making 17 appearances. In 2013, Easton signed a pre-contract agreement with Scottish Premier League club St Johnstone. Easton left the club by mutual consent in August 2015. In October 2015, Easton signed a contract agreement With Elgin City until the summer 2016 after he left St Johnstone by mutual consent in August 2015. Easton's attacking instincts produced many goal assists during his short time with the club. He was a fans favourite with his fine displays and was one of the star players of the season. Easton helped to lead the club to a 2nd-place finish and the promotion the play-offs. He was also named in the Ladbrokes Scottish League Two Team of the Season for 2015–16. On 28 May 2016, it was announced that Easton had signed for Scottish League Two club Clyde. After a positive start to his career at Clyde, Easton was ruled out for an extended period after rupturing his cruciate ligament in Clyde's 3–2 win over Arbroath. However, Easton still managed to win Clyde FC Goal of the Season 2016–17. The midfielder's excellent strike against Montrose in August was the most popular from a shortlist of six, in an online vote. The goal was also included in the shortlist for the PFA Scotland Goal of the Season. He left Clyde in June 2017, He signed a two-year contract with Forfar Athletic on 20 June 2017. Easton joined Lowland League club Kelty Hearts in June 2019. On 11 June 2021, Easton signed for Scottish League



One side Airdrieonians. Easton helped the side to the Championship play offs scoring 8 goals and 12 assists, making him the highest assister in League 1. He won Airdrieonians Player of the Season and the Scottish PFA League 1 player of the year as well as being named in Scotland's PFA League 1 Team of the Year. On 26th May 2022, Easton joined Scottish Championship side Raith Rovers on a 2-year deal.

Alan Ainslie

Alan Ainslie played as a midfielder and forward for Berwick Rangers from 1965 to 1968. He moved to Australia and played for Western Suburbs, Sydney Olympic and the Australia national team. Alan was part of the Berwick Rangers team who achieved that famous cup win over Rangers in 1967.



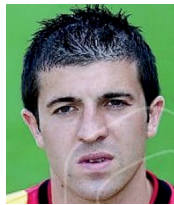
Franck Escalon

Escalon started his senior career with Louhans-Cuiseaux in the 1990s. In 1997 he made 7 appearances for Berwick Rangers before he signed for Ross County where he made sixty-nine appearances and scored three goals before retiring in 2001.



Eddie Forrest

Forrest joined Berwick Rangers in the 2002/2003 season from Premier league side Motherwell and made 11 appearances. He had spells with Arbroath, a brief return to the SPL with Partick Thistle, Forfar Athletic and Ayr United before joining East Stirlingshire. He retired from the game after two years with The Shire, but came out of retirement on November 2010 to return to Airdrie, to play for Airdrieonians' successors Airdrie United.



Hoax victim

In July 2003, Paul Browne returned to Arbroath, after Forrest left on the promise of full-time football at Raith Rovers. Arbroath manager John Brownlie who signed Browne as a replacement for Forrest, then discovered that Forrest had been duped. A telephone call that Forrest had believed to be from Danny Smith, the Raith chairman, had been a hoax. The caller had been Browne, Forrest's prospective replacement, although Browne argued it was "a friend". Forrest was reinstated at Arbroath and Browne summarily sacked, fleeing Scotland, although Forrest subsequently joined Partick Thistle, which led Brownlie to re-sign Browne to fill the defensive gap. Brownlie had to check with captain Andy Dow that the players would accept Browne after the hoax.

Gary Wood

Gary had two spells at Shielfield the first from 1999 to 2003 when he signed from Ross County and ultimately departed for Queen of the South. During this period at Shielfield he clocked up 101 appearances scoring 44 times. He returned three years later from Dumfries and this time stayed for a further two seasons before retiring from the game adding another 38 starts and 10 goals to his tally.



Alex Burke

Burke joined Berwick Rangers for the 2002/2003 season making 36 appearances and scoring 11 goals. He moved on to Queen of the South and Ross County, before signing for Paisley side St Mirren in 2006.



In February 2008, Burke moved on loan to First Division side Dunfermline Athletic until the end of the season. After only playing four matches for the Pars, Jim McIntyre confirmed that Burke had signed a two-year-deal with

the club.

After his released from Dunfermline, he joined Ayr United following a successful trial period.

John McGlynn

McGlynn enjoyed a brief senior playing career with Berwick Rangers from 1980 to 1983, having been a youth player with Bolton Wanderers. After three years with The Borderers, McGlynn dropped out of the senior game into junior football, firstly with Musselburgh Athletic then Whitehill Welfare. During his time at Ferguson Park, McGlynn started coaching youth sides and gradually coaching rather than playing became his primary function. His managerial career saw him manage Raith Rovers, Hearts, Livingston and is currently managing Falkirk.



Stuart Romaines

Stuart Romaines played for Berwick Rangers and featured in over 300 appearances for the club in seasons 1978/79 to 1986/87 & again in 93/94. He moved to Falkirk in 1987 for a fee of £15,000 and then from Falkirk to Raith Rovers for a fee of £10,000 in season 1998 to 1991. He then moved to Alloa season 1991 to 1993 before returning to Shielfield for season 1993 to 1994.



Other players who have passed through the ranks include Ciaran Brian, Ouzy See and Lee Hamilton who are all currently at First division team FC Edinburgh.

Keith Brown

Played 20 games for the club (2002-04) but did play for Barnsley against Ipswich in the 2000 first division play-off final.

TRUST DONATES DEFIBRILLATION CABINET

We are Delighted that Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust have donated £578.80 to cover the costs of the Defibrillator Cabinet that was installed at Shielfield Park back in June. Berwick Rangers Juniors spearheaded the installation, and it is a welcome asset to the community.

The defibrillation unit and cabinet was installed free of charge by James Inkpen of C.F Inkpen & Sons Ltd, an incredibly kind gesture.

Thank you once again to Berwick Rangers FC for allowing us to mount cabinet on Stadium wall. We are very proud that this incredible bit of equipment is now accessible and ready to use for by the public, as well as our teams playing and training in and around Shielfield Park.

The Trust also donated £4,000 to the football club in November which has gone towards this year's playing budget. In doing so, this has allowed Gers' boss Stuart Malcolm to strengthen his squad with the likes of recent addition, Michael Travis.

The Trust contributes in many ways to the running of the club and

to supporters' enjoyment. Recently we have covered the cost of repairs of the video camera and still cameras used on matchdays. The Trust also paid for point-of-sale devices to enable the club shop to take card payments and replacement goal nets. The Supporters Trust have provided more than £100,000 to The Club since its inception, all from members subscriptions. Thanks to all members for their continued support.



SORTED VISITS THE JUNIORS

We would like to thank **SORTED** for coming along and putting a presentation on for our older age groups (u13s, u14s and u15s).

Sorted is Northumberland's Substance Misuse Service for young people.

'Substances' refers to:

- all legal and illegal drugs
- alcohol
- volatile substances, such as solvents and nitrous oxide (laughing gas).

Sorted is made up of specialist workers and health staff.

The service provides intervention for children and young people up to age 18 within the Northumberland area. Young people are supported to stop using substances, and to

reduce the associated risks from substance misuse, both to themselves and their communities. They are also supported to achieve good physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

We as a club have a duty of care for our Kids and we feel it's massively important this information is made available to them.

We would like to thank **SORTED** for making the journey up from Cramlington.

A Huge thank you must go to Jaki Duffy of Rise Northeast for making this possible with her hard work behind the scenes.

And last but not least Berwick Rangers FC for the use of Shielfield Parks facilities.

Thank you everyone!!



THE FABULOUS FIFTIES REVISITED

The 1950s was a golden era in the history of Berwick Rangers with giant-killing Scottish Cup runs, big name signings, election to the Scottish Football League and the building of a new stadium. But the Annual Meeting of 1950 gave no hint of what was on the horizon. Far from it. With no secretary or treasurer, and the finances in a parlous state, it was even suggested that the club withdraw from competitive football altogether for at least a season to sort themselves out.

At that meeting, held in early June 1950, club stalwart Norman Inglis stood down as secretary while the chairman, Capt J.N. Lewin, resigned due to ill health. Gate money had dropped from £658 the previous season to £421, a staggering decrease of 36% with many of the club members disillusioned with the East of Scotland League. After a period of stability, the club was losing money and had a sizeable overdraft at the bank. The future was anything but rosy.

However, all was not lost, with the enthusiastic John Thompson becoming chairman and William Taylor, of the Red Lion, stepping up to become secretary. Within a week of the new committee being confirmed, they demonstrated their ambition by announcing that the club would be attempting to join the Scottish Football League.

They were too late to be elected for the 1950/51 season and therefore remained in the East of Scotland League. However, the committee showed how serious they were about improving the club's standing by appointing Bobby Ancell as player manager in November 1950. Renowned for his exceptional positional play, Ancell was a full back who had played at the highest level for St Mirren, Newcastle United, Dundee and Aberdeen as well as winning two full Scotland international caps. "This will show the people of Berwick that we are determined to get into a higher grade of football," Chairman Thompson told the Berwick Advertiser.

There were promising young players at the club, including Raymond Hogg, who would go on to play for Aston Villa, and Nelson

Younger but Ancell quickly realised that more experience was needed if they were to be successful. His first signing for the club was Jimmy Caskie, a twinkle-toed left winger who had played for St Johnstone, Everton, Rangers and Forfar Athletic. Not only did he have the experience that Ancell desired, he could still bamboozle defenders with his mazy runs and he became an instant crowd favourite.

At the end of January 1951, Berwick Rangers travelled to Brechin City, then a member of the 'C' League that Berwick aspired to, in a

match that was pivotal to the club's future. Although Berwick lost 2-3, they made such an impression with their play that Brechin President Jimmy Beattie said "After this performance, Berwick Rangers would be welcomed with open arms in the league."

There was, however, still much work to be done to convince the other member clubs that Berwick Rangers should be admitted to the league and committee members travelled all over Scotland to state their case.

The season ended with Berwick Rangers finishing a moderate sixth in the East of Scotland League but off the field things looked very bright. The club had held a Bazaar which had cleared the bank overdraft while gates had soared to £1,672, helped by a run to the King Cup Final which included a semi final victory over East of Scotland League champions Hibs 'B'. The Supporters Club contributed over £1,000 to club funds and

there were plans to build a new stadium next to Shielfield Park.

On Monday 4th June 1951 all the hard work finally paid off when Berwick Rangers were admitted to the Scottish Football League 'C' Division.

And if all that wasn't exciting enough, Ancell pulled off a transfer coup on the eve of the 1951/52 season when he signed goal scoring centre forward Albert Juliussen from Everton. Juliussen had played in the same Dundee team as Ancell and had cost Everton a record £10,500 in September 1948 from Portsmouth but, after days of negotiating, a deal was struck that meant his arrival didn't cost Berwick a penny. He netted twice on his debut, a 7-1 friendly win against East Stirlingshire, and the scene was set for Berwick Rangers to make their debut in the 'C' League.



FESTIVE DONATIONS

CHRISTMAS APPEAL DELIVERS THE GOODS

Berwick Rangers & Tweedmouth Rangers this year joined forces with the Salvation Army's Berwick centre as part of their annual Christmas present appeal. Berwick Rangers Director Dan Crowe delivered the donated gifts. Thanks to all of those who contributed,



with a special thanks to loyal Gers' fan David Letham for his substantial donation.

The gifts donated will be going to families in the Berwick area over the coming week.



JUNIORS DONATE TO FOOD BANK

We would like to thank all our teams who kindly donated towards Berwick Community Trust Food Bank, November Advent Calendar. Your generosity was much appreciated and gratefully accepted by the Trust.




The generosity in our town is really special. The Club Secretary Robert Curle and a couple of our BRJ Tigers U15's handed over the food donations.

FOOD BANK NOVEMBER ADVENT

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 Christmas Pudding	2 Tin of Packet or Soup	3 Mince Pies	4 Custard	5 Pack of Sweets	6 Christmas Biscuits or Crackers	
7 Gilly Grannies	8 Tin of Potatoes or Instant Mash	9 Cranberry or Bread Sauce	10 Tin of Vegetables	11 Pickled Onions	12 Rice	13 Pot Snack
14 Hot Dogs or Canned Beef	15 Tuna	16 Christmas Cake	17 Rice Pudding	18 Jelly	19 Deodorant	20 Long Life Milk
21 Crisps or Nuts	22 Jam	23 Tin of Spaghetti or Spaghetti Hoops	24 2 in 1 Shampoo & Conditioner	25 Tea, Coffee or Hot Chocolate	26 Cake, Biscuits or Muffin Mix	27 Tin of Fruit
28 Tin of Chili or Meatballs	29 Lentils or Other Soup Mix	30 Chocolate Tree Decoration				

A different way to donate this Christmas

- GRAB A BOX OR A BAG
- PUT IN 1 ITEM EACH DAY DURING THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER
- BRING YOUR COLLECTED ITEMS TO US IN THE FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER



TRUST BOARD SEEKING NEW MEMBERS

The Trust is actively seeking new members for our Board. Joining the Trust board is an opportunity 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 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 may have in person/ hybrid meetings in the future.

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.





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
- A BOND SCHEME NUMBER
- ADVERTISING SPACE ON THE CLUB'S OFFICIAL SITE
- PROMOTION VIA 'GERS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS
- AN ADVERTISING BOARD INSIDE SHIELDFIELD PARK






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



BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS CLUB
SUPPORTING YOUR CLUB AND YOUR COMMUNITY



HALF A CENTURY OF BLACK AND GOLD

Berwick President and Secretary Dennis McCleary looks back on his time here at Shielfield Park.

When Harry Melrose asked me if I fancied helping out, initially as Assistant Secretary in Season 1969/70, I hardly could have imagined that some 53 years later I would still be involved! I was doing the team announcing at the time and my Dad was one of the gate staff, so I had got to know Harry and wife Betty and my wife Jennifer and myself often went out with them. Harry would never discuss a match with anyone who had not been at the game!

Harry was a great guy. He came as Player Manager having played at top level including Aberdeen and Dunfermline (where he won a Scottish Cup winners medal).

He was down at a home game with the family when we were last in the SPFL.

He was so meticulous in his preparation and kept a huge diary where he logged in details of every game and a short piece on all the opposition team plus a log on away games including bus times, pick ups etc.

It is fair to say then that Berwick Rangers has been a huge part of my life and still is. I have just turned 76 now but as long as I am able to and still enjoying it and the Club want me to say, I will keep going!

I have to admit it not been continuous over the half century as other things took over a couple of times and I stepped away for short periods but it was always going to be the calling!

Harry Patterson was Chairman in the early 1970's era, then I worked with many dedicated people over the years.

Needless to say the Club has always been number one, no matter who is Chairman, Manager or Secretary.

Looking back I think I have worked with some 25 or so Managers over the period, many different characters as you can imagine

but in that time I think it always worked well with everyone. The basis is the Manager trusts the Secretary and vice-versa. At first neither knows each other and it takes a little time to get to know how each works but I feel that all of the lads I have worked with have respected the help and I have respected them.

I don't want to go down the route of saying who has been best Manager here as times differ. Obviously Dave Smith as Player Manager and John Coughlin as Manager winning Championships do stand out (1978/9 and 2006/7) but there have been some excellent leaders and current boss Stuart Malcolm is taking us in the right direction.

I must mention Eric Tait as Player Manager too. Club legend Eric is now also Honorary Vice President and Ambassador and he was one of the first players I signed with Harry Melrose, from Coldstream FC for a 'pittance', a couple of footballs and a small cash amount springs to mind.



Eric's playing record here is unlikely to ever be surpassed! In a playing career here of over 18 years he rattled up over 500 appearances and well over 100 goals, playing in every position including emergency keeper!

His managerial record from 1982 to 1988 saw him oversee 200 games with a 50% win/draw ratio.

Going back now to Dave and John, two completely different characters of course. Dave arrived in 1976 from USA club Los Angeles Aztecs where he played at the very top after his brilliant career at Rangers and previously Aberdeen. He played in America with likes of George Best and Charlie Cooke. It was a coup then for the Board led by Chairman Jimmy Reed and Chairman elect Alec Macnab. The team was bottom of the then Division Two and had parted company with Gordon Haig. Dave according to his excellent 2022 book 'The Road to Barcelona' where he devotes a full chapter to Berwick, had also been touted by French club PSG, the approach via Charlie Cooke. The club took off! Just missing promotion in 1977/78 and going up as deserved champions in 1978/79, scoring goals for fun with Dave masterminding at the back in his white boots and No 13 shirt and players such as Eric, Jimmy Morton, Davie Moyes, Peter Davidson, Pogo Smith etc etc, revelling.

Alec Macnab as Chairman was the driving force too and the club blossomed.

Happy, Happy days and I was awarded a League Championship medal too as Club Secretary.

In 2066/7 John Coughlin had lost a clutch of players and went about re-building a team which included imports from East of Scotland League etc. They were initially complete outsiders but went from strength to strength as the season progressed winning the title with an Iain Diack goal against Arbroath on a never to be forgotten Saturday in front of well over 2,000 fans at Shielfield. John had this knack along with his backroom lads including Matt Kerr, of getting the best out of players. Chris Sanderson's excellent book 'Mission Impossible' highlights that season with players such as Gary O'Connor, Chris McGroarty, Gary Wood, Robbie Horn, Grant McNicoll, Kevin Haynes etc etc stepping forward.

There is one other Manager I want to mention and goodness knows there could be 20 plus others!

Walter Galbraith. Walter was a surprise choice in many eyes when he came on board in the mid 1970's after Harry Melrose moved on to Manager at Dunfermline. Walter had a bit of a record! Two of the clubs he had managed in the past, Accrington and Bradford PA had closed down (back now of course) and was in charge of Hibernian in the early 1960's.



He had not been in Scottish Football for well over ten years and lived on Merseyside. There was a club house in North Road in Berwick but his family stayed on the Wirral and Walter stopped at the Tweed View Hotel.

He actually only was in charge for some ten games and it was a tough time, although he did win three of them. The players were not happy and had a vote of no confidence in Walter and that was that really.



One match stands out. We were due at Forfar on a Boxing Day and Walter told Harry Patterson he was going home for Christmas and there was no way he could get back to Forfar! Travel was a major concern of course. I recall Harry saying "Walter, you are Manager, you have to be there".

The Players were convinced he wouldn't make it but Walter turned up at Station Park about 20 minutes before KO, had his team talk and we won! How he got there I still do not know!

Like I say we have had some great characters as Manager here, many no longer with us of course including Frank Connor, a character and a half who was a terrific motivator of players. Frank sadly passed away in March 2022. At the time he was here he was full time living in the club house in Spittal with his family and Berwick ran a hugely successful Spotcash Weekly Scratch Card which brought in a lot of money. We sold tickets at Berwick Holiday Centre too and they ran a Miss Spotcash competition for us culminating in a final. Myself, Frank and then Commercial Director, Ian Davison, were often judges along with folks from the Holiday Centre. The winner was a Tyneside lass who came to a game late season as a promo and was in the

plunge bath with players, albeit she had on a swimming costume and the players had shorts on. Several of the senior lads were not happy with that though.

Some great times then but sad times too over the period.

The loss of so many good people over the period non more so than of legend Ian 'P' Oliver who passed away so suddenly some four years ago. I worked with Ian over 40 years and still miss him every time I go to the Stadium. He did it all at Shielfield.

In season 1988/89 the Club was nearly bankrupted and locked out of Shielfield, after Berwick Greyhounds took over the lease, having to play their games elsewhere late season! The stand roof was declared unsafe too and came off!

We played at Methil, Coatbridge, Stenhousemuir etc and once even had to play a game v Kilmarnock at Tynecastle after the Council withdrew the Safety Certificate late on a Friday. I had got a phone call at 4.50pm on the Friday from then League Secretary the late Jim Farry to pass on the news!

The club weathered this and other crises in the early 1990s, narrowly avoiding going into administration in 1994.



The injury to Ian Cashmore was a tragedy too. Ian had been on loan from Ayr United thanks to then Manager Jim McSherry who had played for Ayr. We were looking to make it permanent as Ian was scoring goals for fun and netted 4 at East Stirlingshire.

He trained with Ayr and at the time we

were training under lights at Old Shielfield. I was in the office on a Thursday night and Willie McLean the Ayr boss phoned to pass message to Jim to say 'Cash' had hurt his neck and back in a fall in a training accident and was going to Hospital and to rule him out for the Saturday. We were flying high at the time, second in league I recall. I thought no more at the time and passed it on. I was full time then and was in the office at 9am on the Friday. Jim phoned me from Ayr Hospital and was devastated. Cash had broken his neck and was paralysed, an injury he would never recover from and never walk again.

Jim and the club were hit really hard and sadly we tumbled down the table.

Its fair to say that this was a tragedy for Ian, who had a young family too and a fund was set up between Ayr and Berwick which raided from memory over £80k, a fair amount 40 years ago/ We had various functions including a Celtic v Sunderland game here on a Sunday with 3,000 in plus a great talk in at the Berwick Holiday Centre with Kevin Keegan as the main attraction. It added to the fund in place and helped Ian and his family with the work needed for the house in Ayrshire plus it got him a specially adapted car although I vowed after one trip, never to go with him again!!



An absolute gem of a lad as was his family and his Dad who went everywhere with him. Ian kept coaching and was always full of

enthusiasm.

His successes at the unglamorous end of football were recognised in 2010 when Kenny Dalglisch presented him with the Uefa silver Grassroots Leaders award, in recognition of his work in developing young talent.

His son, also Ian (now 39) went on to play for several league clubs including Ayr and Stranraer.

Sadly Ian senior passed away in April 2014 aged only 53.

I could go on for ever more but hope this gives a little insight into the past half century here! A lot of changes then over the years and the current Chair, Brian Porteous has also had a huge impact on the club in recent years as has the current Board including Craig Forsyth who recently stepped down as Vice Chair. Brian is also due to retire and times are a changing again!

I had previously in the Trust magazine listed an all time 50 year team so here it is again. There could be another 30 to 40 in it!

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**

Forwards:
**RODDY GEORGESON, IAN HALL,
ERIC TAIT**

LONE RANGERS REVIEW

PART 2

by JEFFREY ROY

Chapter 5, titled “Is It Because We Is Black And Gold?” opens with a prelude to identifying a situation that existed as part of the Berwick Rangers’ club longer than at other Scottish clubs. A perhaps rare occurrence concerning part of Shielfield Park precedes mention of a notable diplomatic issue for the town. The author offers perspective on the role one of the English Monarchs had on the perception and mindset of Berwick residents for many years. The number of Berwick Rangers players who have played for Scotland is revealed. This is followed by the fortunes of one player after he left the club to play elsewhere. Readers are reminded about a key geographical fact about Berwick which one would do well to remember. Reading what the author wrote about a player from another club, I cannot understand why one with such talent was selected so few times to play internationally. An extended section describes the difficulties in determining how place of birth impacts if a person is entitled to play for one, two, or more countries. The chapter concludes by detailing the unfortunate effects the club suffered from treatment by two football governing bodies. Towards the end of the chapter is the first of two 8-page sections of photographs. I wonder why the author placed it just before the final page of the chapter instead of just after it? In one picture, note how the players were dressed for a dryland training session.

Chapter 6, titled “God Save McQueen” opens by detailing the exploits of a player who played at a high level, whose relative had played for Berwick. I learned an interesting fact about Berwick’s league status and about the structure of the Scottish League at the time. I also learned the year that Berwick enjoyed some success in the Scottish F.A. Cup. A particular reference to Shielfield Park

left me wanting to know more. Managerial vacancies in three countries are mentioned; interestingly, each of the countries has been viewed very negatively at times in the recent past. An incident that may be regarded as one that fostered a sense of ‘team’ is described just before the description of an incident more emphatic than today, when a player barely touched or not touched at all acts as if he or she had been struck by a tsunami from the River Tweed! The chapter concludes with a tantalizing reference to the effect at least one (or more?) player/s from England had while playing at Berwick.

Chapter 7, titled “Good Shot Sir!” opens with the description of some exploits by one of the top scorers to play at Berwick. His career choice was likely not often repeated by future generations of players. He was able to balance one career while also playing for Berwick. A minor debate is identified as to the scope of games in a season which count towards a player’s overall goal total. The training set up that is described is likely not followed by many clubs these days. Lamenting over a particular path he took in football should encourage all young players to carefully consider their options and select the one most beneficial to them. The player’s return to Berwick introduced him to a legend in Scottish football.

Chapter 8, titled “Legalised Brutality” opens with impressions of the training methods of the aforementioned legend when he was the manager at Berwick. I am surprised that players remained committed to such a brutal (my opinion) training regimen. I don’t think such a regimen would be permitted today. One incident that happened in a dressing room would if it happened today likely get

the Manager some time in jail (again, in my opinion). Another incident of the same type happened to a player who went on to national and international acclaim. If I interpret the role of modern player agents correctly, these people would make certain that a Manager who did something like that would be held accountable. I wonder if players such as those who try to get a foul called against an opponent through an accomplished ‘acting job’ would be allowed to conduct themselves in that way. The chapter concludes with a reference to how the famous Manager was involved in a significant result for Berwick.

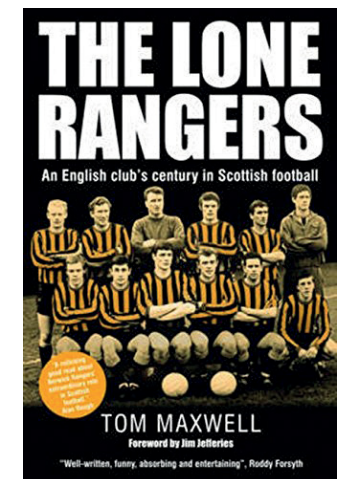
Chapter 9, titled “The Pope On The Crossbar” opens with a recounting of another momentous result in the history of the club. The author then makes a blunt statement about what some people at another club tried to do to Berwick and to four other clubs. Something puzzled me after reading of how the style of Berwick’s manager affected his players against the larger club: Why didn’t that translate to more success in Berwick’s own league? The memory of one player from the larger club suggests that Berwick was not deserving of the result because they were so outplayed. However, if that were the case, the larger club would have won the match. The goal that produced the historic result ranks, according to one publication, as one of the most significant goals scored. I am not certain as to the scope of the list. The chapter concludes by listing the starting eleven of that Berwick squad and a statement of something that happened after the match.

Chapter 10, titled “The Fallout” is the first of two brief chapters and opens by mentioning what happened to Berwick after their historic result against the team in a higher league. In one match, the actions of a player at a particular moment in the match sounds humorous but would likely not be allowed by a referee today. It is not clear if what happened to that Berwick squad was the result of financial concerns or other factors. I was surprised to learn of a former Berwick player who went on to earn

many accolades and accomplishments at other clubs. I felt sad when I learned of what caused the death of a former manager, the same condition my mother is living with. The chapter concludes by referring to a period of success enjoyed by the club and someone who would come to be highly regarded.

Chapter 11, titled “Local Hero” opens by naming a player who scored many goals for Berwick. This player had an intense devotion to the club as a youngster. Unfortunately, his career was hampered by an incident in a match which to me, in reading the account sounds like a deliberate act. His ‘training regimen’ the night before what was credited as one of his finer matches for Berwick is not one to be repeated! There are descriptions of some of the unique locations around Berwick where he would go to train. When he became involved with the club on an administrative level the conditions were not conducive to producing positive results and growth. How did things get in such a state at the club? He suffered a family tragedy that was connected to the Shielfield ground. The chapter concludes with another tantalizing reference, this time to the impact a certain player would have on a positive period for the club.

Next issue: Chapter 12 to the Epilogue.



FITBA, EH.....

by **ANDREW ALLAN**

The beautiful game itself has many faces, the fitba business has many bodies and unfortunately many underbellies. I'll start with the least pleasant body part of my canter through the good, the bad and the ugly of our national sport.

The worldwide collective eye-rolling when Qatar (that Kat-ur, not Kataaaar) was announced as host for the 2022 World Cup, emphasised that we all know, and accept!, some aspects of the fitba business are overtly corrupt. FIFA are the fitba body version of the boy that was stopped every night leaving a DIY store with a wheelbarrow of hay; only after searching through the hay every night for stolen goods, did the security guards twig he was stealing wheelbarrows.

The continuous activities of selling any, and all, parts of our game to the fattest broon envelope is hiding in plain sight and it rips my knitting; every loop being thoroughly unravelled at the sight of the odious Turkish butcher Salt Bae getting his sleezy condiment crusted mitts on the World Cup at the presentation ceremony. An 'access all areas' pass bestowed upon him by FIFA, for an undisclosed sum.

Other deeply questionable behaviour, driven by filthy lucre, was when the early intensive righteous outpouring from TV pundits, on the social inequities of Qatar, was so quickly followed by contracts being torn up left, right and centre by so many highly paid pundits, and the tv coverage being boycotted by these admirable people, following their moral ideals. Not..... How quickly they (and we) forget. Have many of these pundits have even mentioned human rights in Qatar since, in their many subsequent column inches or broadcasts?

On to bodies closer to home, more inequitable than corrupt, was the decision from the (then) newly formed SPFL Trust to split the £3.125M donated by the philanthropic James Anderson, using an inverted pyramid, to support the, erm, pyramid through the pandemic. The Trust showing the most spectacular myopia, in giving the likes of Rangers and Celtic £50,000, where clubs in lower leagues received in the region of £3,000. Had it been the other way round, and the money given where it was most needed, one couldn't imagine any of the SPFL2 clubs giving their £50k to charity, as Aberdeen, Kilmarnock and Celtic most laudably did.



Now, one could reasonably expect the author to mention Old Firm Colts teams in this space, and some reflection on the integrity of the bodies responsible for their inclusion into the SLFL. Oh, ok then.....

To be fair, I actually agree with the concept in principle; it does demonstrably help young players who are 'playing up' against seasoned adult professionals to develop. Both Rangers and Celtic have shown statistics of the increased numbers of colts players reaching the 1st team squad; it's a good model and I'm pleased to see Hearts joining the project. I fully expect to see more players from these colts teams progressing into Scotland under

21 and full international squad.

Where I am at odds with The Suits, is what happens at the end of the season. Our BRFC SLFL representatives were fully behind the equitable suggestion that all colts points and goals be expunged from the table at the end of the season, so promotion and relegation would be based on a true intra-SLFL team league table, rather than being skewed by strong or weakened colts teams results, where they may be resting players on some weeks due to European or international cap influences. Alas, good sense didn't prevail.

Enough of bodies and bellies; onto the face of the game itself, and comparisons we make, day in day out. Starting with the local theatre this time; with our beloved Berwick and how our supporters regard the club.

Too many Berwick Rangers fans live in the past. We have 'From the Grove to The Harrow' (which I love as a fanzine) but not only is its title steeped in yesteryear, more so on anti-social media, it's one of at least three Facebook pages devoted to past teams, players and glories.

I mean no disrespect to the gentlemen behind these ghosts of fitba past, nor the folks who enjoy a regular meander down memory lane; every football club should be proud of their past. It's a question of whether having such an abundance of bygone material may be counterproductive, in relative terms of how much time one spends looking back to time spent looking forward. In my opinion, undue focus on the past unwittingly leads to our support to having an unconscious bias

towards the better times of the past, and an equally unconscious antipathy towards the relatively poorer players and more lowly league position of today.

Turning again to the recent World Cup, how joyous was the fitba and were the fans; the latter in the face of mass-herding into the fan community, crap ticket administration leading



to late admission and the U-turn on alcohol. I was in awe of the numbers of fans who made the pilgrimage. Argentina losing in the group stages, then winning one of the greatest finals in my memory; you just couldn't write that.

On that note, my final body part, not previously mentioned. I may have seemed like the fitba grinch here; I'm far from it. I love the game, I still coach keepers twice a week and Friday night matchdays as part of an under 20's development team in the SLFL Development League. I love seeing young players developing and being given the chance to be the best they can be, for as long as they can.

Excepting the fat-cats there on a ticket, the fans attending the World Cup appeared to love the game unconditionally, as do the majority of Berwick fans; of that I have no doubt. Supporters are at the heart of our clubs; at the heart of the beautiful game is the love supporters hold in their heart for their clubs and countries. As long as we all keep that love for the game and our clubs to the fore, keeping thinking about the politics and corruption in proportion, we can prevail over the nasty bodies and underbellies.

Think not what our clubs can do for us, think more about what we can do for our clubs.

HOPPERS GUIDE OF BERWICK RANGERS

Edited for print by DAVID LETHAM

This is a great blog post that is worth a read, now put to print for those who may have missed it. For more in-depth details such as additional images and video the blog is here: <https://hoppersguide.com/berwick-rangers-shielfield-park-hopper-ales-48/>

goals scored (114). During his time as a player with the club, Eric played in every position, including as a goalkeeper, despite him being a striker by trade. He was also player-manager of the club between 1983 and 1987 and now has a hospitality lounge named after him in the main stand.



After a handshake and a quick chat, Eric invited us to come up to the hospitality area in the main stand following the game and he would show us around.

I will get back to this story later on in the article.

Needless to say, we had fond memories of the day and wanted to make a return visit. Today was the day!

Berwick Rangers, Shielfield Park – Hopper Tales #48

Back to Berwick

This is another return journey to a ground we visited last season but never got around to writing about it. We had an absolute blast last time we visited, thanks to a chance meeting in the Brewers Arms pub. We had been chatting with the owner, a lovely lady called Margaret, and after she asked us why we were in Berwick, she disappeared and went talking to a gentleman at another table.

A couple of minutes later, the man came over to us and introduced himself as Eric Tait.

Now, for those who don't know, Eric Tait is a Berwick Rangers legend. He holds the club record for most appearances (526) and most

Berwick Rangers – Journey and Pregame

The day started like most other Saturdays, with a bus to Newcastle. Setting off just after 09:00 and arriving just before 10:00. From here we made the obligatory stop-off at Gregory and Gregory (Ok, it was just Greggs) for a couple of pastry-based delights for breakfast, before heading off to the train station.

Train Chaos

After arriving, we saw that our 10:54 train to Berwick Upon-Tweed was delayed by over half an hour, due to a passenger being taken ill on board.

The 10:41 train pulled into the station, and we asked the train guard if it would be ok to get on his train instead. He eventually agreed and we clambered aboard a train that was packed

like a sardine tin, with standing room only. This was due to the previous train being cancelled!

Oh! What a great public transport system we have!

We arrived in Berwick at 11:33 and gratefully stepped onto the platform to give our aching legs a stretch. The day was cool but nowhere near as chilly as we had expected it to be, and we went for a walk down to the side of the river Tweed to look at the rail bridge and the remains of Berwick Castle.

Berwick-Upon-Tweed

Berwick-upon-Tweed lies three miles south of the border with Scotland and is a very important strategic town of times past. It houses some historic structures and a complete Elizabethan town wall and ramparts that encircle the oldest parts of the town.

There are three bridges that cross the River Tweed between Berwick and Tweedmouth on the opposite riverbank.

There is the Grade I listed Old Berwick Bridge, which was first constructed in 1611. This is open for both vehicles and pedestrians but is now only a single-lane, one-way system for traffic.

A little further upstream, there is the more modern Royal

Tweed Bridge, which was constructed in the mid-1920s. This is now the more widely used road bridge crossing of the Tweed.

The main focus, for me though, falls on the incredible engineering feat of the Royal Border Bridge. Another Grade I listed structure; this rail bridge spans the river furthest upstream of the three.

When it was first constructed, (1847-1850) it was the largest bridge ever built. It has twenty-eight arches, each of which spans sixty feet and the rail line itself is 121 feet above the

river level.

It was designed by Robert Stevenson, the son of rail pioneer George Stevenson (The Rocket locomotive). Upon its completion, the bridge was opened by none other than Queen Victoria.

At the base of the rail bridge on the Berwick side of the river, is the remnants of Berwick Castle, starting with the White Wall at the bottom of the bank. This stretches up the hill to where the train station now lies but was once the home of Berwick Castle.

There isn't a lot to see these days, unfortunately, but it must have made for a fantastic sight in its glory days.

Lunch

After taking a few pictures of the stunning views of the rail bridge and the river Tweed, we headed off to see Margaret again, in The Brewer's Arms. At least, that was the intention. We were disappointed when we got there to see that the pub was closed and a 'For Sale' sign was on the exterior. Hopefully, a new owner can be found for this excellent pub in the near future.

Meanwhile, we decided to head to The Leaping Salmon, which is located at the end of the Royal Tweed Bridge.

The Leaping Salmon is quite a large pub and we had little trouble finding a table, despite it being reasonably busy. We got a Heineken and a John Smiths for £7.20 and ordered three starters for our lunch (we weren't overly hungry). They have a special deal where you can get three starters for £9.99 and we got cheese fries, pork meatballs and beer-battered onion rings.

The food was basic but decent and was served quite quickly despite them being busy. The table next to ours was filled not long after we sat down by four lads who had come to Berwick from Glasgow to watch the game.

They were looking very festive and had the Christmas jumper look going on. What made these sweaters different, was that they were football themed. Celtic, Rangers, Fiorentina and Napoli, to be exact.

I asked if they were happy to pose for a photograph and I'm happy to say they didn't mind at all.



Cheers, boys! After finishing our pints, we decided to head off to the ground and get a drink in the Black and Gold, Berwick Rangers social club adjacent to the stadium.

Be warned, it's quite a trek from Berwick town to Shielfield.

Park, just over a mile from The Leaping Salmon, or 1.5 miles from the train station. If this is too far for you, there are buses that run most of the way there (B1 or X18 Max).

We decided to walk to get some views of the river from the bridge. About twenty minutes later, we walked into the bar and ordered a Carling and a Belhaven Best bitter for £6.40. The club bar looks like it could do with a little TLC but is a nice enough place to sit and have a pre-match drink.

Berwick Rangers – The Stadium

We supped up our drinks and headed to the ground. There is only one entrance area into Shielfield Park, and it is located at the top end of the ground. It consists of four turnstiles: the

first for season ticket holders, the next two for adults and one for concessions.

Cash or card is accepted on the day at Berwick Rangers.

We used a card and entered Shielfield Park. Upon entering, there is a large piece of ground before you get to the pitch side. At the top of this are the club shop, toilets and a food stand. The club shop is a small but excellent little store. They sell old programmes, match-worn shirts, current replica shirts and a whole host of other little bits and bobs. I got myself a match-worn shirt with the traditional black and gold stripes associated with Berwick. Costing £25, I thought that was a bit of a bargain. I also picked up a team sheet for the day's game to go along with the programme we bought after entering the ground from a seller just inside the turnstiles.

It should be noted that the programme was actually a refurbished copy of the November 19th edition of the postponed game against Cumbernauld Colts. They had put a new, uninspiring cover on it and called it a good 'un. No complaints from me though because it was much more preferable than a digital version, or worse still, no programme at all.

After leaving the store, we walked around the ground taking a few photos and videos.

One thing to note is that Berwick Rangers share Shielfield Park with the Berwick Bandits speedway team and this means the pitch is surrounded by a cinder track for race meetings. While racing tracks of one sort or another aren't always conducive to a great view for football fans, to me it doesn't feel too obtrusive in this particular instance.

To the left, is the Main Stand, which houses the only seats in the stadium. It covers the length of the pitch and contains 1,366 seats. This is more than adequate to seat everyone in the ground on an average matchday for Berwick these days.

Behind the near-side goal is just a path that leads to the other side of the stadium and is pretty much unused because of the gap between it and the pitch giving a pretty dire view of the game.

The opposite end of the ground, while looking similar, is actually inaccessible and isn't used at all. No loss in terms of spectator value.

The far side of the ground is a terrace that runs the length of the pitch and has a roof on the middle section on either side of the halfway line. The roof covers roughly a quarter of the terrace and again, this is more than enough to shelter most crowds for Berwick games.

There are eight floodlights, four on either side of the ground and the pitch surface is of natural grass.

Overall, Shielfield Park isn't the prettiest of grounds on the eye but it has a uniqueness and an old-school quality about it that makes it quite appealing in a strange way.

Coming into this game, Berwick Rangers were in twelfth position in the Lowland League, while their opponents were rock bottom in nineteenth place. The Wee Gers had won just

one of their last four games while losing two and drawing one of the others. Dalbeattie Star had one draw and three losses from their last four games.

Kick-Off

The players came onto the field, and it was the visitors who got things underway.

A taste of what was to follow came in the first minute, as Berwick created an early chance for themselves.

Jamie Stevenson kicked the ball long from the right-back position and over the halfway line where it was picked up by the Rangers midfielder. A couple of neat passes later and the ball found its way to Lewis Allen on the right flank. His cross was played into the box and after controlling the ball, Cammy Graham turned and put his shot just high and wide of the right post.

Promising start!

In fact, the opening few minutes could easily be called the Lewis Allen Show, as he followed up his near-assist with two shots in quick succession that were saved by the Star keeper before setting up Liam Buchannan to put the ball in the net. The 'goal' didn't stand though, as the assistant referee adjudged him



to be in an offside position.

It looked like only a matter of time before Berwick made all this pressure pay off... and they did!

In the eighth minute, a corner from the right-hand side was swung into the six-yard box. Amazingly, captain Jamie Pyper was completely unmarked, and he turned the ball into the net to set an amazing sequence of events in motion.

1-0 Berwick Rangers!

It quickly became a goal-fest after that as the Wee Gers took command of the game.

In the tenth minute, Liam Buchannan got the ball in the net for a second time and this time the linesman had no objections.

It was Alex Harris who created this one from his own half. He picked the ball up, beat two opposition players before slotting the ball through the Dalbeattie defence to leave Buchannan in the clear. He still had work to do, some twenty-five yards from goal and the keeper coming out to meet him. He remained calm and slotted the rolling ball past Martin Johnston.

2-0 Berwick Rangers!

Still, in the tenth minute, two became three. (No Spice Girls jokes here!).

Cammy Graham got on the end of a ball that was whipped into the danger zone by Lewis Allan (again) and amazingly, Berwick Rangers had scored three goals in less than three minutes! I was struggling to keep up with my notetaking at this point!

3-0 Berwick Rangers!

Thankfully, it was another five minutes before Berwick had their next chance and I managed to catch up. Buchannan put his shot over the bar from close range as the game threatened to become an absolute rout.

Dalbeattie managed to stabilise a little at the back after the initial shock of the oncoming storm that had hit them but never looked threatening themselves.

Indeed, it wasn't until the 36th minute that Berwick got their fourth goal.

Right-back, Stevenson whipped a cross from the right to the far post where it was volleyed back across the goal by Blair Sneddon. It was nodded on by Lewis Allan and fell to the feet of Liam Buchannan who had the easy task of slotting it in from close range for his second of the day.

4-0 Berwick Rangers!

At this point, it was pretty much game over and both teams knew it. The game descended into a kind of lethargic stalemate, and it felt like Berwick took their foot off the gas and let their opponents get a little self-esteem back by keeping the score at 4-0 for the rest of the game.

The half-time whistle saw the home side applauded off the field by the hardy home support.

Half-time Berwick Rangers 4 Dalbeattie Star 0
As the teams left the field, we decided to watch the second half from the Main Stand and we walked around the ground, grabbing a cup of tea from the snack bar along the way.

The Second Half

To be quite honest, the second half was a bit of a dead rubber and didn't live up to the heights of the first forty-five.

There was an early chance for Cammy Graham in the 47th minute, after more good work from Sneddon but his shot went high and over the bar.

Buchannan and Graham failed to add to the score with chances before the highlight of the second half came in the 66th minute. Buchannan spotted the keeper off his line

and took a shot from long-range but credit to Johnston, he got back in time and managed to grab the ball with both hands under his crossbar.

Great effort, Liam Buchannan!

There really wasn't much more to say about the second half, other than to point out a few individual performances.

The match sponsors gave the man of the match award to Buchannan for his two-goal performance but there were other players who deserve a mention.

Berwick's defence wasn't exactly overworked but Jamie Pyper put in a captain's performance with a solid game and the opening goal, constantly motivating the players around him. Left-back, Blair Sneddon is at the club on loan from Falkirk and he looks like a decent player, especially at this level, and he showed quite a bit of skill going forward. It will be interesting to see how he fares against stiffer opposition in a defensive duty.

Also, a special mention for Lewis Allen and his instrumental part in that first-half madness that ended the game after just eleven minutes. He played a key role in the first half and was at the helm for much of the damage done.

Full-time –

Berwick Rangers 4 Dalbeattie Star 0
Attendance – 289 Entrance Fee – £10.00
Programme – £2.50

Berwick Rangers – Last Time We Were Here

Following the final whistle, the doors at the back of the Main Stand were open and we made our way from the stadium and down the steps opposite the Black and Gold clubhouse. We walked past the players' and official's entrance, and this is where I come back to the story of our last visit here.

We had been invited to come up for a drink and have a look around by Eric Tait after last

season's game with Spartans. The man at the door waved us up once we told him the details and we headed up the stairs.

There were some wonderful old memorabilia on show on the upper floor.

We found Eric in the TV room along with a lot of other excited people watching the end of the Grand National from Aintree. He saw us and came over and proceeded to show us around, pointing out all the stories behind the memorabilia and finally, showed us the lounge named in his honour. This is where the players of both teams were snacking on their post-game sandwiches and chatting with each other about the game.

After showing us around behind the scenes, Eric took us back to the TV room and we went to the bar and got a shot of whiskey each, while he went back to his friends.

Such a lovely gesture from a man we had never met before that lunchtime, and I bet I'm not the first person to think of this club as Eric Rangers.

He really is the heartbeat of the club, even at 71 years young.

Berwick Rangers – After the Game

Reminiscing aside, we walked past the official entrance and started on the trek back to Berwick train station.

Night had fallen by now and when we reached the bridge back across the river, it was all lit up and looking very nice. I'm not sure if these lights are a permanent feature or part of a festive display for the holidays but they look really good.

The rail bridge wasn't left out either and there were coloured lights illuminating the arches in the distance.

Berwick certainly knows how to sell its star attractions..



After walking over the bridge and past The Leaping Salmon, we came back to the main street and the Christmas tree was all it up, as was the church further down the street. Although you can't tell from the pictures, there was an animated sequence displayed on the town hall, showing falling snow and it looked great.

Well done Berwick!

At the train station, there is a plaque commemorating it being the location of the castle's banqueting hall.

A worrying amount of delays and cancellations were displayed on the monitors but happily, our train wasn't one of them and it showed up at 17:53, on time and without seating drama. We arrived back in Newcastle at 18:35 and made the ten-minute walk to the bus stop for our bus home.

The train had been on time, so it was only fair that the bus wasn't...

We had a nearly forty-five-minute wait for a bus that is supposed to run every fifteen minutes and when it did turn up, needless to say, it was packed with standing room only both upstairs and down. After we had reached Washington, I managed to get a seat (Mrs Hopper got lucky and had a seat all the way.) We were home by 20:15 and another successful 'Hop' was in the books, along with some celebratory chocolate muffins from Tesco!

Next week, we are planning a second attempt to get to Sincil Bank, home of Lincoln City.

With public transport the way it is and with snow predicted for next week, we will have to wait and see if we are successful or not.

TRUST ANAGRAMS



TEAM 2: Guy One-Nil - Neil Young, Fish Playgirl - Gary Phillips, Gig o'hardon - Gordon Haig, T Eleven-nobs - Steven Noble, Falcon Nackers - Franck Escalon, Lance Sorebum - Cameron Blues, Inter Milan - Martin Neil, V.L.Kim (Chinese) - Kevin McLeish, Economy attacker (Z-list) - Scott Taylor-Mackenzie, Mr Lardybake - Mark Bradley, Uncle R Sweatygod - Dwayne Coultriss, E Crazifrog - Craig Peroz, Mick Whalemince - Michael Berwick, Lil manic-god - Dominic Gail

TEAM 1: New Yr. goal flood - Ryan Goodfellow, E.L. Rivelino - Neil Oliver, Wim deaths - Dave Smith, Wesley Richsnot - Chris Tomrsey, Tom L. Shit-lite - Elliott Smith, Ian del Twat - Daniel Watt, Alan C Donkee - Decker O'Kane, Vagina tit - Gavin Tait, Nelly bentbit - Billy Bennett, Dr. N. Ramshite - Darren Smith, Nola Thickjam - Alex Hamilton, Cheap sarnie - Caran Heaps, Mac Smalltrout - Stuart Malcom, Utter Balls - Stuart Bell

THE GREATEST CUP VICTORY SINCE 1967?

There's not been a cup shock like this since Berwick beat Rangers back in 1967. I'm talking, of course, about Darvel beating Aberdeen 1-0 in this season's Scottish Cup. Aberdeen's recent form, which includes a 5-0 drubbing by Hearts, hasn't been great, but you would still have expected them to beat a team of part-timers from the sixth tier of Scottish football.

There may be some readers who know little or nothing about Darvel FC, but they only just missed out on promotion to the Lowland League last season. They lost in a play-off with Tranent Juniors, otherwise we could have been playing them this season. This season, they've continued where they left good form, and currently sit top of the West of Scotland Premier League with 31 points from 13 games. They've also had a good run in the cup so far, having seen off Haddington Athletic, Tynecastle, Dalbeattie Star and Montrose before dispatching Aberdeen. Next up in the cup, they get to play Falkirk at Darvel. Falkirk won't be looking forward to that one, and I don't think I'm alone in saying that I wouldn't bet against the non-leaguers.

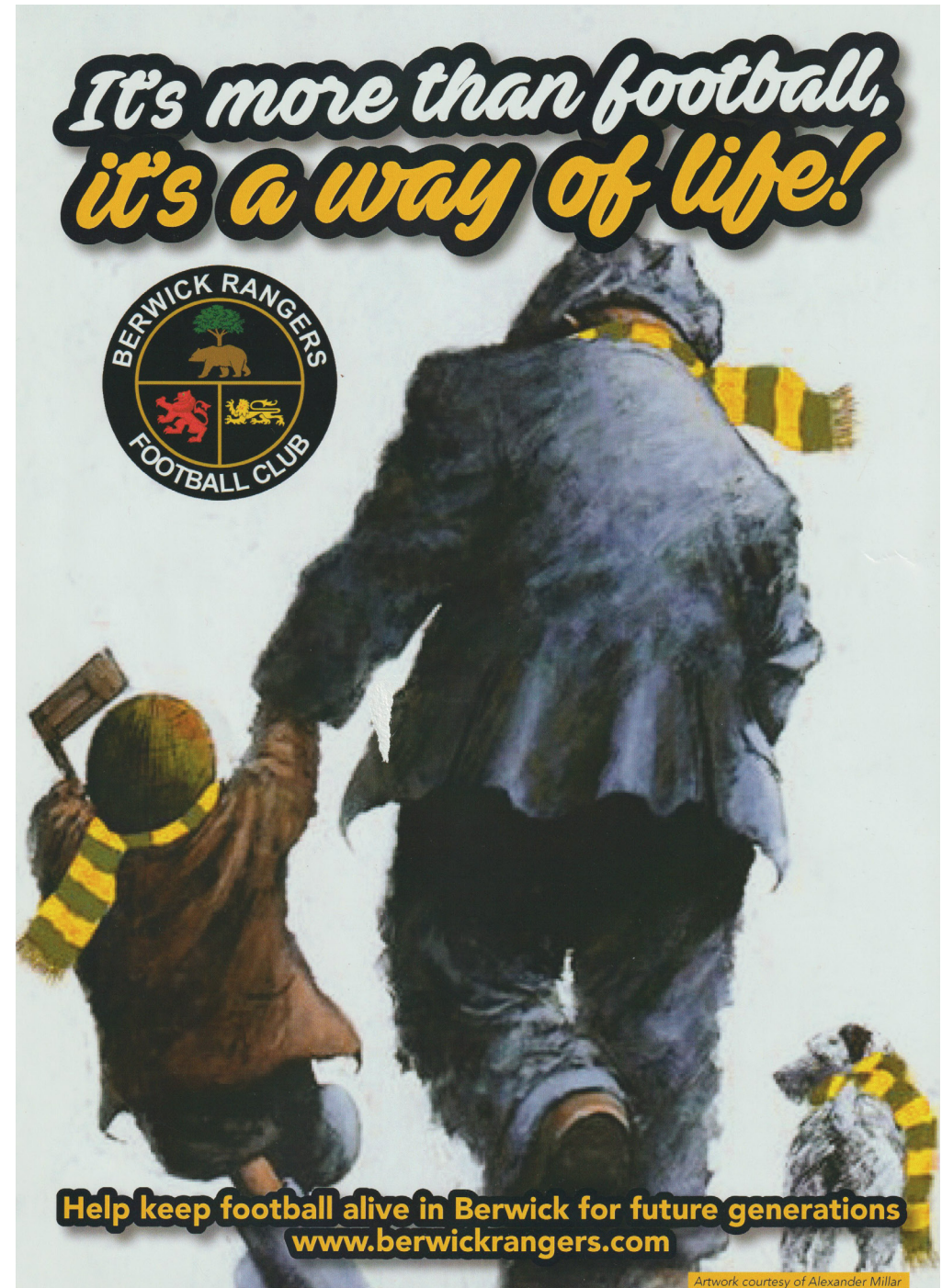
Whilst you might argue that Aberdeen were pretty poor on the night (even their manager admitted as much), but Darvel clearly had a plan, which they followed, and it worked. They started at a high tempo, and although there was a touch of fortune about the goal—it wasn't the best of strikes, and it was deflected—you couldn't say that they didn't deserve it. It also gave them a good deal of confidence. Aberdeen huffed and puffed for most of the night, but Darvel kept closing them down and getting stuck in. They were well worth their lead at half time.

by GORDON BAXTER

In the second half Aberdeen tried to step it up a gear, and the substitutions made them seem a bit more threatening going forward, but Darvel stuck manfully to their task. When Aberdeen did get manage to create any chances, they were mostly in tight situations in the six yard box, but Darvel 'keeper Chris Truesdale pulled off a few great stops at short range. Aberdeen had a goal chalked off for offside, and it wasn't clear why, although I suspect that one or more players may have been coming back from an offside position when the move started. The television replays only showed the move itself, and from those it looked like everyone was onside. It would have been harsh on Darvel, though, if the goal had stood.

Based on their performance against Aberdeen, and their ongoing form and ambitions, I'd expect to see Darvel in the Lowland League very soon. They seem to have the resources both on and off the pitch to go places, and it wouldn't surprise me if they made it into SPFL2 in a short space of time. They look like a team that can defend well, and the can score goals (F 42 A 18 from 13 league games this season) both of which will stand them in good stead if they do make it into the Lowland League.

Postscript: If (or maybe that should be "when") Darvel make it into the Lowland League, make sure you set your SatNav for Darvel in Scotland. The fastest route, according to my sources, says it's 113 miles from Berwick and takes 2 hours 13 minutes. When I initially tried to work out the distance, though, it selected Darvel in Bologna, which is a 1251 mile trip and takes 21 hours and 27 minutes!



THE 2022 WORLD CUP: HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

by GORDON BAXTER

Even with the best will in the world—Gianni Infantino’s bizarre speech, notwithstanding—I think that FIFA would now be recognised and accept that there were some “issues” with the Qatar World Cup. Rules are now in place that will make it much harder to host the World Cup in places that aren’t really suitable. The time of year also proved unsuitable, with many friends saying they struggled to engage with the games because of the timing of kick-offs and just because they were busy or otherwise occupied.

The competition also seemed to drag on, with 32 teams taking part this year. That will only get worse next time around when there’ll be 48 teams. This means they have to finesse things to get from 48 teams (12 leagues of 4?) to a last 16. And while we’re at it, whatever happened to just saying “last 16” instead of “round of 16”?

It also wasn’t a happy place for managers. Several either fell on their sword or were given the old heave-ho after failing to qualify from the league stages. Too many teams didn’t really seem up for it in the early games and/or underestimated their opposition. You could argue that this was because the so-called “best” teams couldn’t find a way to break down a well-organised, if much lesser, opposition. They often contributed to their own downfall, too, by always trying to play out from the back. In this regard, Spain stand out in my mind because of the comment on the BBC text, when 5 minutes were added at the end of the game. The commentator wrote that this would mean that this would give Spain time to make another 50 passes (or words to that effect).

Right from the off, it was clear that this World

Cup was going to be different. In the first game lots of people did a double-take when they found out how many minutes were added at the end of each half. This set a marker for the rest of the competition. FIFA’s plan was to increase the overall amount of time that the ball was in play, so the interminable VAR delays were tagged on to the 30s for each substitution, plus time for injuries.

Ah yes, VAR... If ever there was evidence of the arrogance of FIFA (and football as a whole) it was here. Football was very late in introducing the use of technology. Rather than analysing and learning from other sports, however, they decided that they would go their own way. So, instead of it being used to assist and back up the referees, it is increasingly being used to remotely referee the game. The end result is that players have become unsure about celebrating goals, often having to wait for an age while the VAR decides that some player’s little toe-nail was offside. Offside is such an antiquated rule, anyway, and tinkering with the interpretation has only made things worse. Far better just to do away with it completely, like they’ve done in hockey, where it has made the games much more open and exciting to watch.

The competition (and the games) rumbled on relentlessly along with the rising clamour (from the press and pundits) for Argentina to win it. Much of this was down to the fact that Messi didn’t have a World Cup winner’s medal to his name (something which is true of several of the greatest players of all time, such as Eusebio and Roberto Baggio). I’d have felt more comfortable if the media had highlighted some of Messi’s antics such as winning a penalty by defying the laws of physics. When barely touched by an opponent, he dropped

vertically to the ground facing in one direction, so all his momentum was in a downward direction. Miraculously, though, he managed to roll over three times in the direction of the goal, and the referee pointed to the spot. To make matters worse, the VAR didn’t overrule the decision.

As for the final... France forgot to show up for the first half, and most of the second. Argentina either became complacent or more concerned about losing their lead than winning the game, or something, because the second half was mostly a pretty dull affair.

France didn’t even have a shot on target until the 67th minute. They subsequently roused themselves and had Argentina on the ropes for the last 10 minutes. I can’t remember much happening in extra time, to be honest, apart from the two goals which led to the penalty shoot out. Some have said it was the greatest (or one of the greatest) finals ever. All I can say is that they can’t have watched many of the finals from the past... At least the next finals will be held in the summer.. although, given that there’ll be 48 teams, it may last into the autumn!





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