



Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

Working for Club & Community

TRUST MEMBERS NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2009 • FREE TO MEMBERS • ISSUE NO. 15

OFF TO A FLYER!

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Another Racing Success!



Disco Fever comes to Shielfield

www.berwickrangers.co.uk



Newsletter No. 15 Winter 2009

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from the chairman...

Dear Members,

Welcome to our seasonal newsletter!

Since the start of this season it's been a bit of a struggle to find news – no bad thing after a few turbulent years. Harmony in the Boardroom, no financial crisis, and a young, hungry team that's playing some good football and competing near the top of the division – life's quite good as a Berwick Rangers fan just now.

And it's that very feeling that makes life a little more difficult for those serving the interests of the Supporters Trust. As Trusts throughout the country will testify, it's relatively easy to get supporters involved when your club is facing closure, dropping out of

the league, or run by a manic dictator, but much trickier when things are going well.

So that's our new challenge, to re-group, take stock, and raise the level at which we help Berwick Rangers to be the best small club in the Scottish Leagues, not measured only by success on the field, but by ensuring financial stability, good management, and being a club that's really connected to the community it serves. I recently spoke to a Business Studies class at Berwick High School. Of the 28 or so 15 year-olds there, only 3 had ever been inside Shielfield Park, for either football or speedway. That can't be good for the future of the club!

So come on, join with us in flying the flag for Berwick Rangers, and let's get active!

Enjoy the festive season!

All the best,

John Bell
Chairman
(Director of BRFC)



Seasons greetings to you all, hope you're not getting too excited about the big day, and I certainly hope that you and yours have a pleasant and restful time, and might even get the chance to watch some football!

We're into the second quarter of the season already and as I write this we're sitting second in the league and I think that most supporters will be satisfied with the way things have gone so far this season. After last season's take over we all knew that this season could be hard, being judged as we will be on what can be achieved. Being the second largest shareholding group in the club, as we are, we are firmly in line to be shot at should things go amiss.

While the "Dream Team" has been successful on the pitch we have not been so good at retaining members! From an all time high of 233, membership has dropped to 218. Since our last Newsletter we have had 6 new members but 13 annual subscribers failed to renew their membership and for various reason we have lost another 9. Are we doing something wrong or is it just the current financial conditions? After our AGM in January the new Trust Board will be looking at various ways of retaining and increasing membership but, as always, we shall be pleased to have your views.

vice-chairman

COLIN PIKE

That said, we are where we always wanted to be - playing a major role, as equal partners, in a thoroughly rejuvenated club, with a meaningful influence on what happens both on and off the park.

With the new board now firmly bedded in, and our own Chairman playing a very central role in it, progress is being made on a number of fronts. It really does prove where we can all go when working together.

It has been interesting being involved in the Trust post take over. After all the acrimony of the last few years and the effort it took to be a Trust Representative during that dark time, these current times are so

refreshing, allowing us to look at things from a fresh perspective. The club has been revived in a way that few people would have thought possible after the trials and tribulations of the last few years. We must now focus on how we move the trust forward in this new world of mutual co-operation, and that means making sure we have people with the requisite skills and commitment to help us do that.

As always I can be contacted any time and you are all welcome to attend any of our monthly meetings, just not all at once eh!

Keep the faith.

Colin

membership update

BILL PURVIS

New Members since last Newsletter:
Stephen Carter - Hull
Stephen Dixon - Scarborough
Alastair Grieve - Tweedmouth
Kieran McGrail - Sheffield
Eleanor Robertson - Livingston
John Robertson - Livingston

If any potential new members have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch via the website or on 01890 860329.

Onwards and upwards!

Bill



Mid-Season Review

BY DAVID COOK



What a difference a year makes. Wind the clock back 12 months or so, and the club was in the process of being bought out from an unpopular regime by a collective made up of pro-change directors, the Trust and the Supporters Club.

Once the general merry-making celebrating the exit of RL Wilson and his cronies had subsided however, it was time for a reality check. On the pitch, Rangers were struggling at the bottom end of the league after an initial surge in form had tailed off following Jimmy Crease's replacement of the unlamented and spectacularly unsuccessful Alan McGonigal. Off the pitch, the cost of the buyout had left the coffers pretty much cleaned out. Despite the lack of funds, it was clear that the playing squad needed a substantial overhaul if season 2009/10 was going to have any chance of registering an improvement.

These were some of the challenges confronting the people charged with leading the post-Wilson era, so how well have they done? The early prognosis is an upbeat one. I'm typing this a couple of hours before doing the ice road trucker thing and heading up to a subzero Links Park for the rearranged fixture against Montrose (where we registered an excellent 3-1 win), helping Rangers ascend to the heady heights of second place behind Livingston. Jimmy Crease and his coaches Ian Little and Robbie Horn have done a cracking job so far this season. Before the first whistle blew in the opening fixture at home to Annan, only those on powerful medication or infused with Colombian marching powder would have forecast a sustained challenge at the business end of the league. We're not there by accident. Only Jamie Ewart, Stuart Callaghan, David Greenhill and Fraser McLaren in the usual starting eleven remain from last season's underachieving squad. They've all improved on last season's form, with skipper Callaghan a real driving force. Steven Notman and Elliot Smith are technically Rangers "old boys", having turned out for the black and gold in the past, but their form in this campaign has been a revelation. It takes a good manager to recognise that former players have improved to the extent that they will add something to his teambuilding plans. Alan Brazil has been superb up front, putting in some magnificent shifts and fully justifying his "all round nuisance" tag, as well as heading the Gers' scoring charts; Damon Gray and Oliver Russell arrived

from Hibs with big reputations which both have struggled to justify, though they should be allowed time to adapt to football in the rumbustious world of the Third Division; Gray has the potential to develop into the fox in the box that Rangers' sides have rarely featured, though his partnership with Brazil still needs some work; Andy McLean has earned rave reviews - and the increasing attention of scouts - with his performances at centre-back alongside the ever-competitive Ewart; Mark Peat's goals against column is testament to his solidity between the sticks, and Paul Currie has reminded supporters of the destructive power of a box-to-box midfielder who chips in with crucial goals; this is a team constructed on its ability to fit neatly into Jimmy Crease's ethos of keeping the ball on the deck and using swift and accurate passing to overcome the opposition. Ok, so it has'nt always worked, but it's light years ahead of some of the drivel we were subjected to a couple of years ago. Ask any Rangers fan what they'd rather watch - a footballing side like this one or a team of outsized heifers hoofing the ball skywards for 90 minutes, and they'll choose the former every time.

There have been several highlights on the pitch this season. One of the most popular was the 22nd August win at home over Livingston, a highly-charged affair given added spice by the return of former chairman RL Wilson, who was given some serious bird from all corners of the ground. A warm welcome back it was not. Alan Brazil's rapturously-received winner sent the Duckett in orbit, and not far behind was the textbook away performance at Almondvale, when a near perfect Gers display was spoiled by a last minute equaliser from Danny Griffin. The most complete footballing performance probably came at home to the impregnable Albion Rovers on 31st October, Rangers cruising to a two goal victory which could easily have ended up five or six goals instead, such was their superiority over one of the best sides in the league. So where will Rangers end up? Well, that depends on how well a smallish squad holds up to injuries and suspensions. My gut feeling is that the squad is probably a couple of players short, for cover if not a starting spot. The league remains a tight one, with Livingston still odds on favourites to win on the basis of their superior resources and interesting approach to maintaining a number of full-time players despite their much-publicised financial predicament,

albeit not helped by a SFL fine of £3000 plus a further £1000 compensation to Shire after the first division wannabes defaulted on their opening game of the season. In fairness, they also seem to have a successful youth policy and Andrew Halliday for one looks destined for greater things. I still think Forfar will be in the mix as the season heads towards a conclusion, together with Shire and Albion Rovers, all of whom are likely to be contesting a play-off spot with the Gers unless Livingston implode. In terms of playing style, the only criticisms I have of the Gers - and how I would have settled for these minor niggles a couple of years ago - are their over-reliance on playing through Callaghan in the midfield and the amount of times we miss sitters or batter the woodwork. I think we'll make the play-offs. After that, all bets are off. One of the interesting side effects of the team's success this season has been the speed at which supporters' expectations are raised, most notable after the fortunate home draw with Queens Park a couple of weeks ago. This was a game Rangers would have lost in previous seasons, but they held on and despite playing poorly manufactured some brilliant chances to nick the win.

Improvements off the field are keeping pace with those on the pitch. The board, working harmoniously in contrast to the internecine warfare of recent years, have welcomed a new director in Jeff Burnlees, who owns main shirt sponsor JB Site Investigations, whilst the Trust and Supporters Club are continuing to build their working relationship and are supporting each others' events. Crowds are up, though I'd love to see the average break the 500 mark (I think we'll get there if we make the play-offs), and the club's finances are being restored ahead of schedule. Even Northumberland County Council - yep, that's the "local" one based in Morpeth - are taking an interest. The club has come a long way in a very short space of time. There remains some distance to go and the experience of the last few years means that no-one with an interest in Berwick Rangers can ever be complacent again, but this is a football club reborn where supporters have a greater influence on how it's run than ever before. A lot of supporters at other clubs will be envious of what we're building here. That momentum has to be maintained and the internal divisions which wracked the club for the last few seasons never repeated.

As part of that ongoing improvement plan, the Trust will be carrying out a comprehensive survey of Berwick Rangers supporters to find out what their priorities are, both for the short-term and in the longer term. This will take place after the new year. We're working on the content of the survey at the moment, but it is intended that the key messages from the response be fed back to the football club board through our own director, John Bell, with a view to including these in a shared action plan for the future involving the football club, Trust and Supporters Club. To whet your appetite, here's an extract from a new book called "Managing Football" by Simon Chadwick and Sean Hamil which explains the ingredients necessary for a successful football club:

- 1) Maintain a steady position in the middle of an appropriate league for your potential and fan base
 - 2) Avoid relegation, and, to a lesser extent, promotion (I understand the rationale for this one, but which supporter would willingly give up the rare excitement of a promotion push?)
 - 3) Develop a committed and loyal local fan base
 - 4) Develop a long term relationship with a sponsor that is itself financially stable
 - 5) Avoid the longer-term uncertainty of benefactor dependency (eg Gretna)
 - 6) Own your own stadium, preferably one built since publication of the Taylor report
 - 7) Ensure the stadium has facilities for match day hospitality and revenue-generating non-match day activities
 - 8) Have performance-related contracts for the players
 - 9) Maintain a squad that reflects the club's league position in terms of performance and wages
 - 10) Employ a manager who is successful on the pitch and appreciative of financial constraints
- Food for thought; you don't have to agree with everything they say, but these are guys who know the business in the dog eat dog world of the lower leagues - so their views are based on hard-won experience.

So, when you're pestered by a strange man with unfortunate facial hair and a clipboard at Shieffield on a freezing Saturday in February, a) it's Pikey, but b) at least you'll know what it's about. Stay tuned, and get your mates along to Shieffield. It's worth it.

RACE NIGHT

We hosted another successful race night at corporate sponsor The Pilot Inn, Berwick, on Friday 30th October, raising in excess of £1000 for Berwick Rangers FC. The Trust donated £600 to BRFC in advance of Saturday's excellent home win over fellow title challengers Albion Rovers and the remainder of the monies will be put towards other activities which will benefit the football club.

The Trust board would like to thank everyone who came along to another entertaining evening and contributed towards the monies raised on the night. Special mention goes to Les and Martin, for their expert handling of the main event, BRFC manager Jimmy Crease and his wife, who lent some glamour to the evening, and race sponsors The Brown Bear, Eric Deighton, David Cook, Keenweld Welding Supplies Ltd, Berwick Shellfish Company, Berwick Rangers Supporters Club, Box 22 Planning & Regeneration Consultancy Ltd, Bob Hay Bookmakers and Dixon Leisure, plus all those who generously donated raffle prizes or simply gave up their time to help out.

Last but not least, a big thanks to Spadge and his staff for keeping the beer and the patter flowing, with excellent pints of Vale Blonde from Buckinghamshire and Fyne Ales Vital Spark helping down the pies and peas. Or did I miss them?

The next Trust event is the 70s disco on 12th December, and plans are already in hand for another race night at Berwick Holiday Centre. Thanks again to everyone for their support.



Our vice-chairman celebrates his only win of the night!

TRUST MEMBERS AT BIG 'GERS

Trust Secretary, Karen Thorburn, her partner and Trust member Colin Keenan and his son Michael managed to get tickets at the 11th hour to last months Old Firm game. Before the game they managed to meet American signing Maurice Edu, who was happy to chat and have his photo taken with Colin and Michael.



Major League Soccer Rookie of the Year 2007 Maurice previously played for Toronto FC before coming to the UK and has been capped twice for his home team the US. Joining Rangers in August 2008, Mo scored for Rangers last season, but injury meant that he missed playing in the 2009 Scottish Cup Final, and has since found first team opportunities hard to come by.

SUPPORTERS TRUST ANNOUNCE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Trust is seeking feedback on the services it provides to members both now and in the future. Times change and the Football Club is now in safe hands compared to when we were first formed and the Trust realised that little was known about the make up of its members, their views and expectations for the future. It was decided that a simple questionnaire would be drawn up and distributed to members for completion. All information given is confidential and will be treated according to terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. We aim to send out the questionnaire soon, it may even be accompanying this newsletter! The results will be used to help form future strategies and ultimately give a better service to members. The bigger the response the more accurate the picture will be so please spend a few minutes filling in the form and help us to help you.

TRUST CALENDAR

All Trust members will receive their free calendar featuring up to date photos of the players, most of them action shots. This is the 4th year that our members have benefited from being part of our Trust. For those who are not them a small number will be made available of £5 a time.



TRUST AGM

We will hold our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the main function room of the Black & Gold Social Club, at 11.00 on Saturday, 30th January 2009.

The meeting will be open to existing Trust members and anyone interested in joining up. This AGM is of particular importance because it will deal with the appointment of a new Trust board. The Trust's rules require the board to be reappointed every 2 years. A number of existing board members have already indicated that they intend to stand for appointment to the board once again, but there will be at least 4 vacancies and new board members are sought, so if you're interested in joining the Trust board or know someone else who is, make sure you complete the nomination form which will be sent out in the next couple of weeks with the AGM papers. The Trust board has a maximum of 15 places. If more than 15 nominations are received by the deadline for nominations, an election will be held and the Trust membership will be asked to vote (by post) on their 15 preferred candidates.

The AGM agenda will also include standard items including the Chairman's report, financial and audit reports, plus additional items such as survey proposals and fundraising activity. It's also intended to have a couple of guest speakers, one of whom is likely to be Berwick Rangers manager Jimmy Crease. If you'd like to find out more about what the Trust board has been doing on your behalf, or if you have ideas or comments that you'd like to put forward, this is an ideal opportunity. The meeting is also conducted on a relatively informal basis, so don't be put off by the prospect of having to listen to hours of boring commentary on rules and regulations - it isn't like that at all. This is a great chance for you as a Trust member to make a contribution to the future work and organisation of the Trust - we look forward to seeing you there.

DISCO FEVER

A 1970s disco was held by Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust at The Black & Gold Club on Saturday 12th December. The event was attended by around one hundred people, many of whom were dressed in 1970s retro gear including Glam Rockers, Bay City Rollers, Abba lookalikes and Punks. The music was supplied by local DJ legend Tommy "Tucker" McLeod who kept the colourful and appreciative crowd entertained with a superb variety of all things seventies playing all of the many requests that were asked for.

There was a short break around 10pm with background music allowing for the excellent buffet of pies and peas to be served up by the first class staff of the club.

Following this BRFC chairman Brian Porteous chose and awarded the prizes of a bottle of whisky and a bottle of vodka to the best fancy dressed male and female of the evening. Brian's choices were Ian Beresford (pictured) as a punk and Lesley Burn as a vision in silver.

After this BRFC manager Jimmy Crease drew the raffle prizes, a huge thank you to everyone who donated. The night rocked on after this until 1am, it was a testimony of how good a night it was by the amount of people who were still around when the last song was played. However, these kind of nights always go in far too quickly and sadly the night came to an end, but a fantastic night was enjoyed by everyone who attended and a number of people were asking when the next one would be held.

At the moment we are looking at holding a 1980s disco around May/June and possibly a 60s & 70s disco next December.

Thanks to all who supported this event, over £350 was raised on the night which will go towards the running and upkeep of Berwick Rangers Football Club.



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Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

JOIN TODAY FROM ONLY £2!

WHAT WE'RE ABOUT...

Established in 2003, we have quickly become one of the most successful Supporters Trust organisations in the UK. We have also managed to become the second biggest shareholders in Berwick Rangers F.C., through the purchase of shares. The Trust is owned and run by its members who each have one vote. The Supporters Trust cannot guarantee greater success on the pitch, but works to ensure the club continues for the benefit of the community and all supporters of Berwick Rangers F.C.

WHAT WE DO...

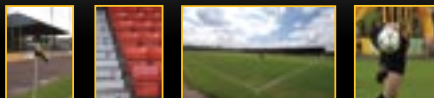
We are involved in many projects and initiatives. Our core aims are to:

- Strengthen the bonds between the Football Club and the community which it serves.
- Promote the principle of supporter representation on the Football Club Board.
- Promote football and its development locally.

We have put over £30,000 into the football club to help with first team affairs, stadium improvements, youth and reserves, as well as merchandising and marketing.

GET INVOLVED! FROM ONLY £2 PER MONTH

If you like the sound of what we do and would like to become a Supporters Trust member, please fill in your details overleaf. You can choose to be a Senior, Junior or Corporate Member. We will be in touch shortly to complete your application and you will receive your membership card, certificate, pin badge and car sticker. If you have any queries, please get in touch - 0776 418 9983 or trust@berwickrangers.co.uk



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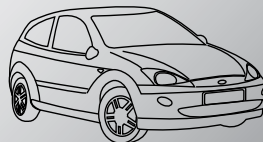


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