

Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

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BERWICK'S FIRST HERO

Sammy Reid (1939-2014)

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Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

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Winter 2014



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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Hello...

Welcome to this bumper edition of the Trust newsletter. I believe it is the first time it has extended to 24 pages and I hope that you all find within it, articles of particular interest. Seven writers have contributed to this edition which again, I think is a record.

On the field, it has been a frustrating season so far. Inevitably, when talking to fellow supporters about the team's performances, opinions are mixed ranging from, "I don't really think the present Berwick team is all that good," to "This is the best squad we've ever had and sooner or later, it's going to click."

My personal highlight to date was the 1-0 Scottish Cup replay victory at Cliftonhill in truly terrible conditions. The person who invents an 'all weather' football kit, if such a thing is possible, could make a fortune out of Scottish football!

Already, fans are talking about our 5th Round tie in Edinburgh and despite Spartans being outwith the SPFL, this seems to be shaping up as the biggest game of the season so far. Ignore the fact that we won at Ainslie Park in a pre-season friendly on an evening when there were more substitutions from both sides than there were film extras in 'Ben Hur'! More pertinent to recall that a few years ago, Spartans put us out of the Scottish Cup at their old City Park ground.

Another talking point is the scheduled television appearance by Berwick Rangers on Saturday, February 21st when we play Queen's Park at Hampden in a game with a 5:30 p.m. kick off. This match forms part of the SPFL's deal with BBC Alba



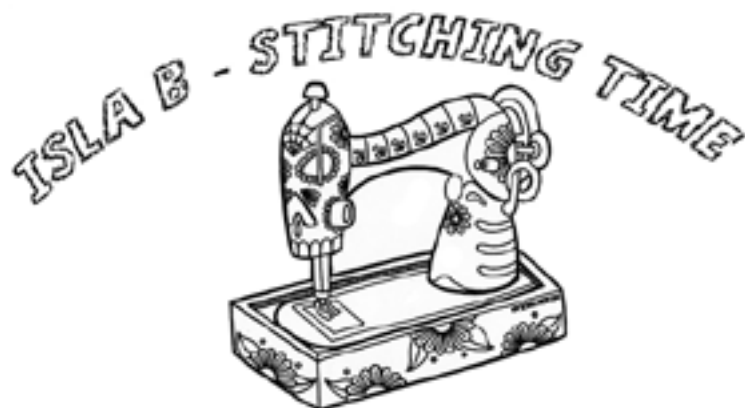
so those watching at home should at least learn the Gaelic word for 'Berwick'!

Let's hope we make it to the Cup Quarter Finals and also the play-offs---at the top end of the table. Few supporters will need reminding that this year, SPFL 2's bottom club will be involved in a run off with a Highland or Lowland League club to determine which plays in SPFL 2 next season.

For Rangers' second team--the Development League side-- the main frustration has been the number of postponements meaning there is a bit of catching up to do as regards fixtures in the second half of the season. However, they finished the first half of the year with consecutive 2-all draws at Stenhousemuir and against league leaders Raith Rovers in Kirkcaldy where they came back from 2-0 down to take a well deserved point from a team which early on, threatened to run riot.

Enjoy the rest of the season,

Michael
Michael Smyth,
Chairman



ALL TYPES OF SEWING AND ALTERATIONS UNDERTAKEN
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FOOT NOTE:

If you have an questions or issues, or any contributions for our newsletter, email: trust@berwickrangers.org

Everyone involved at Berwick Rangers was saddened to hear about the death of Sammy Reid, scorer of the club's most famous goal, at his Wishaw home in Lanarkshire on November 9 aged 75.

Sammy was part of the Berwick team which famously defeated Rangers in the Scottish Cup first round on January 28, 1967 in what is still considered to be one of the biggest upsets in the history of Scottish football and a result which gave the Wee Gers some significant publicity in the aftermath of the game.

Despite spending just one season with Berwick, Sammy's left-footed strike on 32 minutes against a Rangers side laden with Scottish internationals helped write his and his team-mates' names into Berwick Rangers folklore in what was a truly unforgettable day for the club.

More recently, Sammy had been back at Shielfield Park on October 4 where he watched Berwick defeat Formartine United 2-0 in the Scottish Cup second round and he had also planned to attend the fourth round tie against Albion Rovers on November 29.

Tributes poured in for Sammy from ex-team-mates, club officials and fans alike and led by friend and team-mate Russell Craig, here are some tributes to Sammy and memories of that game in 1967.

Russell Craig, team-mate of Sammy in 1967, said: "I went about with Sammy for the last 25 years and I knew him as a very determined and strong-minded man. He played with Clyde and broke his kneecap in a game at Easter Road which put his career on hold before he was signed by Ian Spence at Berwick in 1966. Big Jock (Wallace) arrived on the scene and we proceeded to beat Rangers in the Scottish Cup which was an unforgettable day that people are still talking



about nearly 50 years later. He was a great character who didn't suffer fools gladly, despite being just 5ft 4in tall, but more importantly he was a good family man."

Alan Ainslie, also a team-mate of Sammy in 1967, said: "I was the youngest in the team in '67 so he was like the father figure to me in the dressing room. I looked up to him, as did some of the other younger lads like Kenny Dowds because at that time, I was only 19 and he would've been around 27 and he'd been around and played a bit more. He had a lot of injury problems but he was the total professional and such a nice guy. The special thing as well about '67 is the team that played against Rangers never played together again because the following game Jock didn't play, when it came to the Hibs game George Christie didn't play and at the end of the season that was it."

Eric Tait, Berwick Rangers' record appearance maker and goalscorer, said: "Sammy is somebody I'll always look up to because he was a legend at the club and what he did is something that will never be forgotten. I remember being in the Duckett for the game as a 16-year-old at a time when I never missed a game for many years and I'm sure there won't ever be another upset like that again as the gap between the teams was so much bigger back then than what it is now. Sammy's goal is something which is still very fresh

in my mind, I can visualise it all the time and I can remember just how awesome a day it was to be a Berwick fan."

John Bell, Berwick Rangers vice-chairman, said: "We were genuinely saddened to hear of Sammy's passing on Sunday as when we saw him last there was no hint that he was ill and we were fully expecting to see him around the club more often. The whole team – although Sammy does get singled out for scoring the goal – are quite legendary and there's no doubt that what those guys did put Berwick Rangers on the map in Scottish football. It was also probably the single biggest event that put the club on the map in world football terms too with a lot of people regarding it as one of the greatest ever cup shocks."

Dennis McCleary, Berwick Rangers club secretary, said: "It was just so sad to hear the news about Sammy as he'd been looking ever so well when he was last down here two or three weeks ago and I even said to him that he looked fit enough to be pulling on the number eight shirt. I was there (in 1967) with my mother among a lot of Rangers fans in what is now the North Stand and was then cinder terracing and my dad was on a turnstile. I honestly thought, as did Jock Wallace, that Berwick had a chance, although few believed it but we were in cracking form at the time. For Berwick the publicity was immense. They filled Sunday and daily newspapers for days after with Sammy of course being the main focus of attention with Jock."

David Spence, Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust committee member and 12 at the time of the Rangers game, said: "I met Sammy about half a dozen times in the last 20 years and found him to be the perfect gentleman who always had time to speak to us fans. When we drew Rangers in 1967 it was a time of great excitement, especially as a few of my closest friends were fans of the Ibrox Club

and when Sammy scored that goal it was mental. The pitch was invaded by a few hundred people and I was nearly on myself but was persuaded not to by a member of the constabulary, although I was part of the pitch invasion when the final whistle blew. My sincere condolences to his family and friends and as far as Berwick Rangers are concerned, he won't be forgotten."



Elsewhere, Motherwell paid tribute to one of their famous 'Ancell Babes' with Sammy an integral part of arguably their finest team in the late 50s while Falkirk, Clyde and Liverpool – who Sammy failed to make a competitive appearance for after an £8,000 move from Motherwell in 1960 – also paid their respects with articles on their official club websites.

The club's social media feeds were also inundated with messages of sympathy from fans, highlighting the high regard in which Sammy was held.

Neil McLain wrote on the club's Facebook page: 'Sammy the biggest name in the history of Berwick Rangers, gone but will never be forgotten. This legend's name will be spoken for many years to come. Always remembered. RIP! James Welsh wrote: 'R.I.P. Sammy Reid. Berwick Rangers legend. Thank you for the most famous moment in Berwick's history!'

Sammy's funeral took place on Tuesday, November 18 at Cambusnethan North Parish Church in his hometown of Wishaw, Lanarkshire with a contingent from the club in attendance.

I don't know if Tom Hanks is a football fan and even if he is I doubt that he will pay much attention to what happens in SPFL Two. It is probably just as well, because if he did, then he would be entitled to accuse BRFC of pinching the plot from his hit movie Groundhog Day. Just as they did last season, Rangers after a decent start, proceeded to embark on a run of seven games without a win picking up 4 points from a possible 21. As well as the season as a whole resembling a repeat from 12 months ago, the actual games themselves have been following the same script with Rangers being the dominant team in the first half before fading in the second half.

A well known internet football forum recently produced statistics that showed that if points were awarded for first and second half results then Rangers would have been top of the league for the first half but bottom of the league for the second half. As I write this, Rangers have played 17 league games. At half time Rangers have been ahead in seven games, level in eight games and behind in only two. Contrast that with the second half outcomes. Rangers have won the second half four times, drawn the second half 4 times and lost the second half 9 times. So the evidence is pretty damning and confirms that Rangers are a first half team who for some reason fall away in the second half. It all started in the opening game. Those Rangers fans who were present will painfully recall that Rangers played Arbroath off the park during the first 45 minutes and indeed had it been a boxing match I suspect that the referee would have stopped the fight. The downside was that despite their domination, Rangers had only managed to find the net once and we all knew that failure to put the game out of Arbroath's reach could come back to haunt us. And so it proved. Rangers faded, Arbroath came into the game and scored twice to take the points north. This scenario has largely been repeated in most games with Rangers surrendering leads to either draw, or even worse, lose games.

As a consequence of the winless run and other inconsistent results, Rangers currently lie a considerable distance off the pace being set by the top three of Arbroath, Albion Rovers and Queens Park. As I write this, Rangers are a massive 23 points adrift of league leaders Arbroath and 16 points behind third placed Queens Park. Fortunately the other teams have been equally inconsistent and at the time of writing Rangers lie 4 points off a play off position. On that basis a winning run should see Rangers establish themselves in the play off places and hopefully at the same time reduce the gap currently enjoyed by the top three as we head into the business end of the season. That said it is disappointing that yet again Rangers are scrambling around fighting for just 4th place. I am not a teacher, but if this was a report card then it would conclude that Rangers performances to date have not been good enough and that they must do better. If you look at the stats, Rangers have won 5 league games out of 17. If you take into account that 2 of these wins came in the first 3 games then it reads 3 wins out of the last 14. That is not good enough and the win ratio will have to be greatly improved in the second half of the season if Rangers are to have any chance of making the end of season play offs.

We have a manager in place who was unequivocally accepted by Rangers fans as being the right man for the job when he was appointed a year ago and allegedly the FC board made the highest playing budget available to him in the summer. Like most Rangers fans, I was hopeful that the team would mount a sustained challenge for the league title this season but that hope has long been extinguished and in truth, if the recent game against league leaders and champions elect Arbroath is anything to go by, Rangers are well short of the standard required. Apart from Kerr Young, none of the new signings have made any significant impact. Steven Notman has been immense and even at this stage must be a stick on to win the various end of season player of the



year awards by a considerable distance. Devon Jacobs, Johnny Fairbairn, Ross Gray and Darren Lavery have all been decent with Lavery again showing that he has the ability to score all sorts of goals despite, in my view, continually being played out of position. The rest have frankly been disappointing including last season's player of the year, Lee Currie, who has looked a shadow of the player he was last . However, league titles and play off places are not handed out halfway through a season and there is still time for Rangers to turn things round. As we saw last season, Stirling Albion, who Rangers thumped in Colin Cameron's first game, won something like 8 or 9 games on the bounce to finish 3rd and they then went on to win the play offs. Nobody who saw Stirling that January afternoon would have foreseen that they would go on to qualify for the play offs let alone win them so hope springs eternal.

The one distraction that all small clubs such as Berwick sometimes encounter, albeit a welcome one, is a cup run. There was little to cheer in the early season Petrofac and League Cup ties. Although Rangers squeezed past Queens Park on penalties in the first round of the Petrofac cup they

then lost to Morton at Cappielow in the second round having been knocked out of the League Cup at the first hurdle by the same team at the same venue a couple of weeks earlier.

As I write this Rangers are through to the last 16 of the Scottish Cup and as all Rangers fans will know have been drawn away to Lowland League side Spartans. Both sides will look upon this as an opportunity to reach the quarter finals which for either side would represent a fantastic achievement. Some people have suggested that this is the tie of the round and therefore it is disappointing that the TV companies have shunned the opportunity to show the game live and have yet again pandered to the Old Firm. I suspect that most neutrals would much rather see Spartans -v- Berwick than Raith's tie at Ibrox. However, I am sure that the newspapers will give significant coverage to the tie in the week leading up to the game and doubtless Rangers will be cheered on by a large and vociferous travelling support who will make the short journey up the A1 to the capital city hoping to see Rangers progress to the last eight.

Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust is affiliated to Supporters Direct Scotland. In conjunction with the Scottish Football Association, SDS conducted a 'National Football Survey' in April, 2014 which offered fans a say on a range of issues. Final results were released in November.

The survey attracted just over 3,000 respondents, 92% of whom were male. By age, the biggest cohort was in the 35-49 group and by occupation, 35% described themselves as at 'Professional/Senior/Intermediate Management' level. According to the statistics, a small number of Berwick Rangers supporters contributed to the survey.

Some key findings were:

Summer football

61% were in favour of a season running from March to November, 30% against

Alcohol ban at Scottish grounds

62% were in favour of lifting the ban imposed under the Criminal Justice Act (1980) with 35% against

Match fixing and betting

Only 14% of respondents were 'very' worried about match fixing and 56% were either 'not very worried' about it or 'not at all worried'

Racism

68% believed that Scottish football does not have a problem with racism but 26% thought that it does

Homophobia

62% said Scottish football does not have a homophobia problem but 24% said there was such a problem

Sectarianism

This was seen as a bigger issue than either of the

two above with more than 84% suggesting that sectarianism remained a problem with just 14% believing otherwise

Pyramid system

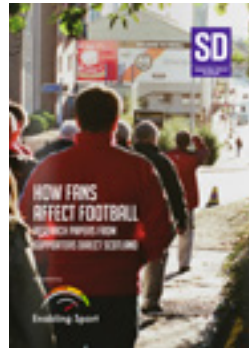
88% were happy about the introduction of the Lowland League and the pyramid system

Fan representation

Over 93% thought that supporters should be represented in their club's boardroom and 91% were of the opinion that the fan/community model of club ownership could work in Scotland

Some aspects of the survey are included in a somewhat academic tome, 'How Fans Affect Football', whose contributors include Andrew Jenkin, Project Manager at SDS. The chapter dealing with summer football was written by Kevin McCluskie and Georgios Vagenas. Amongst the benefits of summer football they list the following:

- It could help attract a family audience encouraged by the prospect of better weather
- Fans can travel home from away matches for a few hours of daylight rather than on a dark, wet night
- Ground maintenance costs are reduced in the summer
- Far fewer postponements = less chance of losing money and reduces the uncertainty of budgeting
- Opportunity to sell more summer focused merchandise



Points against switching to the summer include some mentioned by fans in a 2012 Pie and Bovril survey:

- Fans not wishing to lose the matches played over the festive season
- Unpredictability of the weather may act as a leveller for smaller clubs against the bigger teams
- The summer is a holiday period when fans use their leisure time for other pursuits and will not attend football matches

Nevertheless, the authors of this chapter feel that taking into account the financial advantages, the potential for increased match attendances (because of better weather) and the possibility of an improved product on pitches less adversely affected by the weather, summer football should at least be given proper consideration AND could provide an opportunity to move away from the current monotonous system of playing the same opposition four times a season.

Andrew Jenkin also wrote about the alcohol ban. There were recurring themes from respondents as to why the ban should be rescinded such as:

- The provision of alcohol works elsewhere. England and Germany were often cited as examples of other countries that have been able to incorporate alcohol into 'the match day experience'.
- 'It works in Rugby'. Rugby games were made exempt from the ban in 2007 so why is football restricted by specific legislation? That hospitality guests at soccer matches can still drink whilst the normal punter cannot, is also seen as unfair.
- 'Why should we suffer for others' mistakes?' i.e. a feeling that everyone was being punished for the misdemeanours of Celtic and Rangers fans

whose crowd disorder had often been fuelled by alcohol consumption.

Jenkin does caution that lifting the drinking restrictions could compromise football clubs' wider efforts to promote healthy and active lifestyles.

SDS points out that there are 31 Scottish clubs with Supporters Trusts. Four, Stirling Albion, Dunfermline Athletic, Clyde and East Stirlingshire are in community ownership and another four, Motherwell, Hearts, Annan Athletic and Ayr United are close to being under such ownership. With particular reference to the role of Trusts, a couple of comments from fans stand out. Make up your own minds whether they are applicable at Berwick.

"Football supporters are such a divergent bunch.....half the people are wanting you to be hammering the club harder, the other half don't want you to be criticising them at all."

"I think there is increasingly an anti-Trust mentality at clubs, that they tend to see them in a very kind of adversarial way. We've had quite a lot of flack about saying critical things about the ownership."

However, whilst fans mostly agreed with the principle of supporter ownership, this did not necessarily mean they wanted them to have full control but rather, an official formal say in the running of the club and board representation as a minimum.

N.B. Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust currently has a 16.6% shareholding in Berwick Rangers F.C. with club vice chairman John Bell its representative on the club board.



'History and Reminiscences of the Berwick Rangers Football Club' was compiled by former player Rupert King. Published around 1946, it was on sale for two shillings and sixpence.

King joined Berwick Rangers from another local team in 1890 but his compilation of his own and others' recollections about the club go back further. We learn that one of our current goal-keepers is not the first William Bald to play for the club. A namesake, a Dunfermline man living and working in Berwick, is described as the first captain. His name apart, what catches the eye in Mr. King's description of him is that apparently, 'he carried on his person as he played a full copy of the Rules of Football written out by himself and that, in case of dispute between the players or umpires (sic), he produced this folio of Rules and referred the disputants to it'.

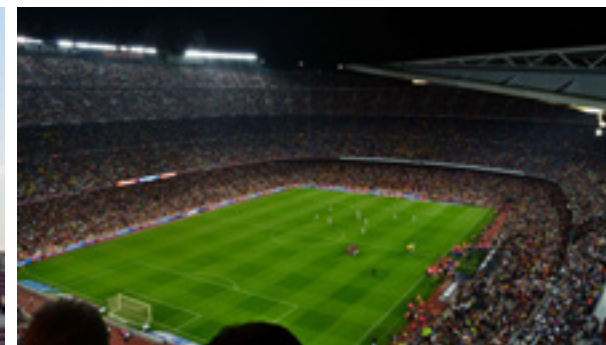
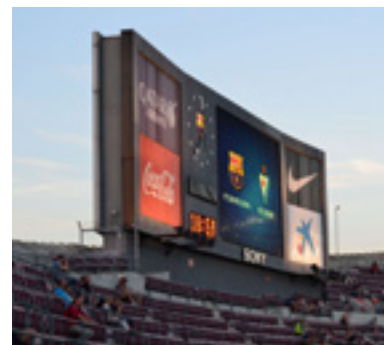
So arguing with match officials is nothing new but any modern day captain attempting to explain the rules onfield would get short shrift (and probably a yellow card) from today's 'umpires'. Incidentally, 'The Reminiscences' also reveal that in the early days of organised football, there were actually two umpires - one appointed by each side.

*** In 1905-6, Berwick Rangers won the East of Scotland Consolation Cup beating Selkirk 2-1. Five to six hundred Berwick supporters 'invaded' Kelso for the final including a man with a black and yellow umbrella. Another group, about twenty strong, performed as a 'choir', singing at intervals during the match. That King mentions these two phenomena in relation to this particular game suggests it may have been one of the first occasions on which club colours were visible amongst the spectators and chanting was heard around the ground.

*** Rupert King also refers to end of season five-a-side competitions being staged at Shielfield in the late 19th century during Rangers' first period of tenure at the (old) ground between 1890-1902. The truncated form of the game clearly has a longer pedigree than might be imagined and here's a thought--might the five-a-side version of the game have been invented in Berwick?!

Rupert King is sitting on the far left of the middle row in the photo above of the Berwick Rangers team of 1895-96.

HOMAGE IN CATALONIA (WITH APOLOGIES TO THE LATE GEORGE ORWELL)



Trust Board member Brendan Thorburn relates details of his visit to Barcelona where a highlight was seeing one of the world's most famous teams and greatest players in action.

In October 2014, I travelled to Barcelona with a group of friends for bit of sight seeing, adventure and of course, to visit the Nou Camp to watch FC Barcelona play Eibar, a team from the Basque Country. As you probably know, football is huge in Barcelona and when it comes to match day it's very easy to get excited when the streets are filled with supporters walking the streets. Nou Camp was just a couple of underground stops away from where we were staying so it wasn't long before we could take a wander along and soak in the atmosphere.

When we arrived at the stadium we could see tiny groups of supporters for the opposing team but they were surrounded by hundreds and thousands of Barcelona fans. As we continued to walk around, we spotted another crowd gathering and taking photos of the cars with tinted windows that were entering the stadium complex, the fans hoping to snap photos of their favourite players. After finally finding our gate number, we made our way in to find our seats and get ready for kick off.

In the first half Eibar did themselves proud and

although Barcelona were clearly dominating, Eibar had the better chances just before half time, with a through ball to Ander Capa whose shot just went wide of an open goal. A few minutes later, Barcelona's defence let them down again, a long ball to Saul Berjon saw him with a clean shot on goal which was then saved by the goalkeeper. The game remained scoreless until 14 minutes into the second half when Barcelona finally scored with a goal from Xavi who was assisted by Lionel Messi.

Barcelona continued to dominate the game and their determination brought another goal by Neymar who volleyed the ball into the net to secure the game. Not long after that came the moment we had all been waiting for, as Messi played a one-two with Neymar before firing the ball on to the right post and into the net. It was fantastic to see Messi mark his 10th anniversary at Barcelona with this, his 250th league goal.

It wasn't just the football that we had in common, it seems wherever I go there is talk of independence! This time however, it was of Catalan independence from Spain. While strolling around the city, it didn't take long before you came across protesters carrying Catalan flags and posters with news crews conducting interviews on the streets. Sometimes it felt like I was still at home!

A renamed league, the signing of three French players and a spate of postponements were three features of the first half of the season for Berwick Rangers' second team.

Berwick quit the East of Scotland League to concentrate on the SPFL Reserve League which is now called the Development League. Rangers are one of nine teams in the East section who are due to play each other three times over the season. The emphasis is on developing young players with clubs limited to fielding no more than five who were over the age of 19 on January 1st, 2014. Stricter rules also apply to the use of trialists.

Teething troubles led to the postponement of a couple of early matches meaning Berwick's start was delayed until late September when Cowdenbeath visited Shielfield. Helped by a Craig Sutherland hat trick, they hit Berwick for six. Next, came a 2-0 defeat to East Stirlingshire at Stirling University. Berwick's first goal and first point came from match number three at home to Forfar, a game reminiscent of some of the previous term's best Reserve League games.

After the availability of only the bare eleven necessitated manager Colin Cameron playing the whole game at Stirling, the Forfar match marked the debut of three French players. All are in Scotland to develop both their English language and football skills at the Edinburgh branch of Edusport Academy. Some readers may have seen this name in South of Scotland League results but that is a Hamilton-based side. Colin Cameron does some coaching at the Edinburgh wing and fixed up the trio after they played against a Berwick XI in a closed doors game at Shielfield. However, they were unable to immediately play competitively because of the need to obtain international clearance.

Swiss youngster Jonas Burkhard played the first



half against Livingston at Dalkeith but struggled to make an impact in his only appearance. Rangers went down 3-0 to a Livi team which included Simon Mensing and Mark Burchill. A 2-all draw at home to Raith followed, Berwick unlucky not to spoil Rovers' unbeaten record.

The team then went a month without a league game as waterlogged pitches led to postponements. They did get game time in a 4-2 friendly win over Haddington Athletic on the artificial surface in Haddington where both clubs train. Scott Dalziel hit a hat trick. His was also the goal which ensured a first league success two weeks later, 1-0 over 'Shire. More rain saw the game called off at Shielfield. It proved possible to rearrange it for 24 hours later at Ochilview but, as the 'home' side, the hire of Stenhousemuir's artificial pitch came at considerable expense to Berwick. More games, home and away, fell victim to the weather in December.

First team squad members such as Dalziel, Paul Willis, Scott Maxwell and Jonny Fairbairn have all played and those loaned to Junior clubs such



as Ben Miller (Arniston Rangers) and Jordan Easton (Tranent) have been recalled for the midweek Development games.

So, of the younger players, who has caught the eye? Midfielders Matthieu Judor and Zak Khouiel attract attention because of their all action style but some observers have picked out centre back Anthony Monin as the best of the French, showing some classy touches and a willingness to attack when opportunities arise. Berwickshire High School student Gregor Watson has turned

in some solid performances in defence whilst goalkeeper Nils Bleakley (see separate article) was undoubtedly man of the match in the win over 'Shire.

The Trust has lent its support to the team, providing match reports for the official club website and app and our own website. We have also covered the cost of the anticipated laundry bill for the entire season. Trust member Peter Unwin is official kit man to the team and also helps transport players to and from away games.

The Trust got together with the Supporters Club to produce and distribute posters advertising the William Hill Fourth Round Scottish Cup tie at home to Albion Rovers on Saturday, November 29th. Otherwise, there would have been no publicity for the match visible around the town. Presumably, the regularly published black and gold posters listing forthcoming matches between mid November to mid January were already printed before the Cup draw was known.

So did our posters achieve the aim of attracting more people into the ground? Judged solely on crude numbers, the answer would be 'yes'. The official attendance at the previous home tie against Formartine United was 347. There was an increase approaching one hundred for the Albion game though the 439 counted as present represented the lowest crowd of the round, one fewer than watched Annan Athletic play Brechin City.

On the other hand, it was not unrealistic to expect a bigger gate for the visit of Rovers, irrespective of poster publicity; a club going well in SPFL 2 as opposed to the Highland League, one from a bigger town and crucially, with a shorter distance for away fans to travel to get to Shielfield. Formartine did bring down a small group of fans, Albion Rovers more. It is impossible to say if the Trust/Supporters Club posters (designed by Kieran Bowell) helped bring in more locals than would have otherwise attended. Only if the round on round increase had been significantly higher might such a judgement have been possible.

The broader picture was of a Fourth Round of generally disappointing crowds. Non-league sides Bo'ness United and Spartans enjoyed bumper gatherings at home to Arbroath and Morton respectively but the all Premiership matches produced some very poor figures. At Firhill, Partick Thistle v. Hamilton Accies drew

barely 2,500, Cup holders St. Johnstone pulled in fewer than 2,500 for the visit of Ross County whilst under 2,000 saw St.Mirren draw with Caley Thistle. The following day, even Rangers mustered fewer than 15,000 at Ibrox against Kilmarnock.

Conventional wisdom states that Cup crowds are adversely affected by season ticket holders staying away as these tickets are not valid for Cup games. But would this make much difference at Berwick where the number of season ticket purchasers is relatively small and we all know of season ticket owners who attend Cup ties regardless? The bigger picture is one of a Scottish Cup which has lost much of its glamour, a situation not helped by the number of ties between teams in the same division who will already play each other at least four times a season anyway.

...BUT IT CERTAINLY MATTERS TO SOME

Further to the comment about the Scottish Cup losing some of its lustre, Cliftonhill Park, Coatbridge on a Tuesday night in December provided plenty of evidence that it still matters to some.

There may have been only 311 spectators at the 4th Round Replay between Albion Rovers and Berwick Rangers but the passion of both sets of supporters and the wholehearted efforts of both teams in atrocious conditions helped generate a lively atmosphere.

Most telling was the reaction of the saturated Berwick players as they trooped off the field at the end with a 1-0 victory. Their delight at getting through to the 5th Round was encapsulated perfectly by keeper Michael Andrews' expression as he punched the air just before going down the tunnel.

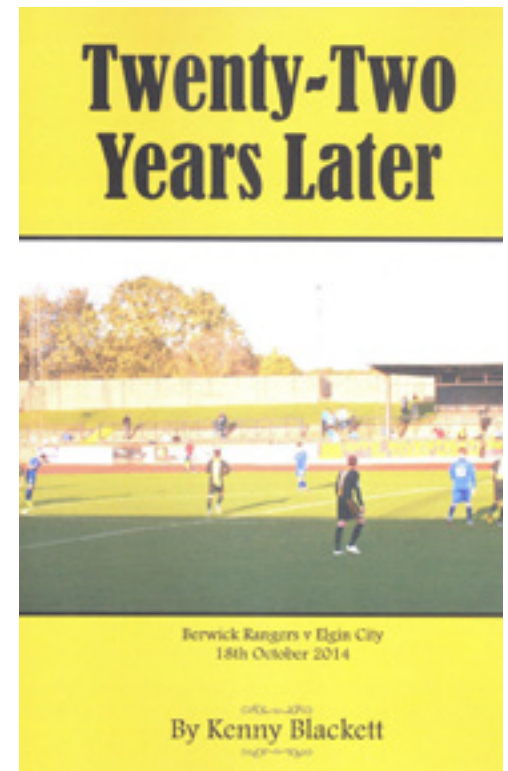
Berwick Rangers in Poetry...

'Twenty-Two Years Later' is the title of an anthology of poems penned by Kenny Blackett and self-published towards the end of last year. Kenny lives in Spittal, Berwick. The book's name is linked to one of the thirty plus compositions in the collection, the one inspired by the author's return to watch a match at Shielfield in August, 2014 after a 22 year absence. The game in question was Berwick's 5-0 SPFL 2 win over East Stirlingshire.

Kenny explains at the start that the previous occasion he visited Shielfield was for a Scottish Cup tie between Berwick Rangers and Meadowbank Thistle. The poem takes its name from the year of this clash, '1992'. The opening four verses relate to the game against the Edinburgh club, the next four, to the more recent encounter with 'Shire. The poem ends with Kenny pondering whether or not he will be attending future matches. (He did.)

Current players hoping for a mention in dispatches will be disappointed. Only (Lee) Currie is directly named with reference to his stunning goal against East Stirling. However, two players from an earlier generation are highlighted in a second poem about Kenny's home town club which is entitled, 'An Entertaining Football Match, East Fife 3 Berwick Rangers 4'. This time, the venue was Methil.

Kenny was one of a group of sixteen Berwick fans who travelled north for the game in 1964. Despite the pouring rain, Rangers built a 3-0 lead. The Fifers clawed their way back to 3-all before Berwick's Billy Boyce scored the winner with minutes to go. The other Ranger named is (Dave) Somerville. The fourth verse is all about an altercation between him and a home fan who threw a soaking wet ball at his face!



The book contains a number of other football related numbers including one on Germany's 7-1 World Cup demolition of Brazil in last year's World Cup. The rest cover a range of subjects ranging from Flight MH17, the Scottish independence referendum to dolphins sighted off Berwick but the book's front cover picture fits in with the explanation for its title. It is an action shot from Berwick Rangers' home game versus Elgin City at a sunny Shielfield last October.

SUPPORTERS TRUST AGM GUEST SPEAKER - TOMMY GRAHAM

Trust Board member David Spence gives a run-down on the career of Tommy Graham who is guest speaker at the Trust AGM on January 17th.

Tommy made his debut as a trialist for Berwick Rangers in what was the last home game of the season on 25th April 1987 against Cowdenbeath. Despite a 1-6 hammering from the Blue Brazil he obviously impressed manager Eric Tait and was signed immediately after the match.

Early the following season, there were occasional starts and some appearances as substitute until the end of January 1988 when he won a regular place in the starting line up. His first goal was scored in a home league game against Stranraer on 26th March 1988, the first goal in a 2-0 victory. He scored two more that season, one in each of the last two league games of that campaign.

The next two seasons were frustrating ones for Tommy who struggled to win a regular place in the team. Season 1990-91 brought a change in fortunes, and under player manager Ralph Callaghan, Tommy made 35 appearances plus six as sub scoring eleven goals in the process. He still played mainly as a winger at this time, always seeming to run for miles in every game but with little defensive work involved. In later seasons, different managers and changed tactics meant that Tommy had more defending to do, but most of the Shielfield regulars will remember him as an exciting winger, always taking on opposing defenders and usually coming off best.

There had been some good seasons when Rangers did well but others when the team struggled, but Tommy could always be relied



upon to give his best for the club in whatever role was required of him. His first season at Shielfield was probably the most difficult with only six wins from 39 league games with only sixteen points gained all season.

In 1993-94 season when Berwick needed to finish in the top six in Division Two to avoid dropping down to the new Division Three, Tom played his part in a run of nine games undefeated at the end of the season which included five consecutive wins in the last five games, which helped Rangers to finish the season in second place. Tommy's last appearance for the Black and Gold was on 25th October 1997 when he came on as a sub in a 4-1 win over Dumbarton.

Including substitute appearances Tommy played a total of 306 games for Berwick Rangers (not including friendlies or City Cup games) scoring 39 goals along the way in a playing career that lasted from April 1987 until October 1998.

Tommy was a one club man and was deservedly awarded a testimonial match against a Newcastle United select on 9th December 1998. He can also be described as one of football's nice guys and a true Berwick Rangers legend.

Trust Board member and current Berwick Rangers F.C. vice chairman John Bell (pictured) unearthed the following story about a relative who was once also involved with the club.

I've long been aware of a family connection with Berwick Rangers going back many years: my late uncle, Gordon Bell, was a stalwart of the Supporters Club and served as a Director of the Football Club. Another uncle, Albert Brown, was groundsman at Shielfield in the late 70's, early 80's. But a story concerning my uncle John Bell, (known to most as Jackie) only recently came to the fore during a conversation with a cousin about family histories.

It seems that before the war, while only a teenager himself, my Uncle Jackie was the unofficial 'bucket and sponge' man for Berwick Rangers. On this particular occasion, Berwick were playing away to Duns. Berwick had in their team a young lad on loan from Hibernian, and a very able footballer he was showing himself to be. Duns had in their ranks an Adam Middlemas, who'd played for the club for many years but lived and worked in Berwick, at the woodyard in Tweedmouth. The story goes that this young Hibs' boy had been pretty useful, and Middlemas had taken to enforcing a somewhat physical presence, taking every opportunity to put the young lad several feet in the air

On one occasion, while lying prostrate in the mud, Uncle Jackie ran onto the pitch complete with his 'medical kit' of copious cold water and tended to the young victim of yet another robust challenge. Middlemas sauntered over and reminded the lad about the fact it was a 'man's game' and that he would be getting more of such treatment as the game wore on. At this point Uncle Jackie was feeling pretty protective of the young starlet, and the red mist descended. From a kneeling position, he gave Middlemas an upper-cut to the chin that left the Duns man unconscious.

Now in those days, a Duns v Berwick match attracted huge interest and sizeable crowds, and a large portion of that sizeable crowd took exception to the fact that one of their stalwarts had just been laid low. They proceeded to chase Uncle Jackie from the pitch, and kept chasing him until he was a long, long way away from the town. Having lost his pursuers he found a phone box and organised a lift back to Berwick.



Middlemas was quite keen to let the whole affair drop, especially as he was a Berwick chap, but Duns pressed charges on a point of principle and several weeks later Uncle Jackie was summoned to Duns Sheriff Court, where he was fined five pounds – quite a punishment when his weekly wage at the time was thirty shillings.

I contacted Colin Pike, the Duns Chairman, to seek some corroboration about the story, and sure enough, it seems to have taken place on 22nd October, 1933, in the South of Scotland Cup, and the newspaper of the time reported that a Duns player had been assaulted by a fan.

I'm sure Berwick Rangers would have been quite eager to support the view that Uncle Jackie had no official connection with the Club!



The Trust Board is charged with spending members' money---your money---wisely and believes it is important to keep you informed on where it goes. So, if you have missed our postings on the Trust website, here is a breakdown of what we have spent so far this season.

The biggest outlay was two instalments of £1,500 to help pay for the club's training facilities at Haddington. In fact recently, Thursday night training has been switched to another artificial pitch at Spartans' Ainslie Park in Edinburgh, primarily because the time slot available was more convenient than the one on offer in East Lothian. This change makes no real difference to our commitment to pay half the season's bill for training facilities as the cost of hiring the Edinburgh pitch is similar to that for Whittingehame Drive. It could even be that familiarity with the surroundings will stand us in good stead when we come to play Spartans in the next round of the Scottish Cup!

Early in the season, we donated £550 to the club for a regular, full page advert in the matchday programme and £175 (for each) to keep our two boards on display inside the ground. Two hundred and ninety one pounds covered the cost of new lights in and around the turnstiles, £360, the annual laundry bill for the development team and around £120 for twelve

new jackets for the Shielfield ballboys. Whilst the club approached us for help with training costs, the lights, laundry and jackets were the outcome of initiatives by Trust members.

Berwick Rangers also asked if we would consider helping with the costs of faster (private) medical treatment for injured players. The Trust Board's positive response has already been vindicated. Andy Russell was a beneficiary of this treatment and his winning goal in the Scottish Cup 4th Round replay at Coatbridge means that the club, simply by reaching the 5th Round, will recoup a much greater sum than the £250 we donated.

As an industrial and provident society, we are legally obliged to have our accounts properly scrutinised. As many of you will know, the cost of accounting is not cheap and we expect an eventual bill in the region of £500 from Greaves, West and Ayre of Berwick.

As for the rest of this season, we will pay the final tranche of £1,500 towards training grounds which alone, will bring the total given to the football club this campaign to about £6,500 but with your continuing support, we may be able to do even better than that.



■ *The Shielfield ballboys show off the club's initials on the back of their new jackets donated by the Trust*

BRFC APP UPDATE

Towards the end of the 2013/2014 season, Berwick Rangers became the first club outside the Scottish Premier League to release their own official club app, with the exception of Rangers FC writes Dale McCrea.

Since March 2014, the app has become a key channel of communication for the club helping tell of the latest BRFC news and information, with news such as new signings and postponements often being revealed first via push notification directly to the phones of fans.

It has also become a new way to communicate with the club. For example, fans who couldn't make the recent talk-in with Colin Cameron & Robbie Horn were able to submit their questions to the management via their mobile.

However Spontly, the Newcastle-based app developer who are responsible for the development of the app, aren't resting on the relative success thus far.

In fact, it is hoped that by its first anniversary, there will be an update for the app which will completely transform both app design and capabilities. The update will see a completely new interface, making for a much improved looking app. In addition, new features will include forums for fans to make discussion through the week, live scores from elsewhere, a 'latest' screen and private messaging.

In addition, annoying bugs such as the random news ordering problem, which has plagued the app since release, will finally be eliminated meaning it will be easier to access the latest news on Berwick Rangers.

At the minute, the new version remains in beta testing, however a release is hoped to be confirmed for March 2015 – though all being well, it could be as soon as late January. In the meantime, if you still haven't got the app, head to the App Store or Google Play and search 'Berwick Rangers' to download.

AROUND THE GROUNDS

OCHILVIEW: A Berwick fan was stopped by a steward as he approached the turnstiles prior to the game against East Stirlingshire on November 8th. last year. The steward wanted to know the contents of the bag he was carrying. When the fan declared it was food and drink, he was then asked whether the latter was in a bottle. Replying in the affirmative, he was then told he could not take it into the ground.

A little agitated, the supporter asked the steward, "What do you think I am going to do with it?" before dutifully removing the bottle from his bag, drank half its contents and enlarged an existing puddle with the remainder of the water inside.

There were only 273 spectators at that game and it is highly unlikely any of them were bent on making trouble by throwing a bottle of water on to the pitch or anywhere else. This is a ground famed for its hot soup and of course, hot drinks are also available from the tea bar. Cups of these would seem to be as potentially dangerous weapons as bottles of cold water, more so because of the hot contents.

STARK'S PARK: In one of the stands at this ground a sign proclaims, 'Preferred Families Section'. What does this mean? This is where Raith Rovers prefer family groups to sit or is it an area designated for use by families which are particular favourites of Raith Rovers F.C.?

SHIELFIELD: Why can't matchday attendances at Berwick Rangers home games be announced at half time as they are at places like Arbroath and Annan? If the final figure has not been calculated by then, it could be announced towards the end of the game or even immediately after it ends. It's a small thing, costs nothing and keeps supporters informed about what's going on at their football club.



Played 17, lost 17, scored 19, conceded 133..... that's the unenviable league record of Dumfries YMCA in the first half of 2014-15. The club was admitted to the South of Scotland League last summer after their previous competition, the Dumfries Amateur League folded. Results suggest that the step up to the senior ranks has been, to say the least, 'challenging' for the YMCA.

They opened their campaign with a 5-1 loss at home to fellow Dumfries club, Heston Rovers and save for one or two narrow defeats, it has been pretty much downhill from there. For example, in the return fixture v. Heston (at Queen of the South's Palmerston Park), they were beaten 13-1. Other horrendous scorelines have included 10-1 at home to Edusport



Academy, 12-0 at Newton Stewart and 10-2 and 14-2 against two other Dumfries sides, Crichton and Lochar Thistle respectively.

Needless to say, with an average of scoring just over a goal a game but leaking almost eight per match, the YMCA currently occupy bottom place in the fourteen team South League. Nor was there any respite in the SFA South Challenge Cup where they took an 11-0 pasting at the hands of Lowland League Gretna in the middle of November.

Neither was there a new dawn at the turn of the year. In their first game in 2015, Dumfries YMCA crashed out of the Potts Cup with a 10-0 defeat at Creetown.

A second club called 'Rangers' is playing at Shielfield this season, or more precisely, at next door Old Shielfield. In 2010, a group of friends who gathered on Sundays for a kickabout or a friendly game, decided to get serious and Tweedmouth Rangers F.C. was born. Accepted into the North Northumberland League, the club is now in its top division.

The team previously played home matches on the Billendean pitch in Spittal but sharing this with another local amateur club meant the playing surface got little respite. Berwick Rangers' groundsman Ross Aitchison is also a Tweedmouth Ranger and through this connection, a deal was reached with Berwick Rangers Supporters Club, who hold the lease for Shielfield, for Tweedmouth to move grounds. Foundations for dugouts have been laid and there are now advertising boards on one side of the ground with more improvements planned. Players change in the Berwick Rangers' dressing rooms under the Main Stand.

Towards the end of last season, and anticipating their move to Old Shielfield, Tweedmouth made enquiries about joining the East of Scotland League. They also formally applied to join the Northern Alliance who sent an official to measure their new home to see if it met requirements. However, before the Alliance AGM, the Berwick club withdrew its bid for

membership, committee and players feeling they weren't quite ready to step up.

All of the current twenty man playing squad live in Berwick. Behind Tweedmouth's idea of moving up the football ladder is a desire to give local players the opportunity to play at a higher standard for a club actually based in the town rather than as at present, gravitating to East of Scotland clubs across the border. Goalkeeper Scott Lumsden already has EoS experience and is a Scotland amateur international whilst centre half Kieran Cromarty played as a trialist with Kelso United at the beginning of this season.

Tweedmouth Rangers' colours are orange and black. The club is run by a six member committee with David Shields as manager and Andrew Dickson as coach.

It is now likely that the club would only apply for the Alliance or EoS should it finish as either champions or runners-up of the NNL. Though the Alliance automatically considers each season's North Northumberland champs for membership, geographically, Scottish football would be the easier option as the bulk of Alliance away games would necessitate travel to south Northumberland and Tyneside. However, if Tweedmouth Rangers do go in the opposite direction, they may need to change their conspicuously English badge!





NEWS SNIPPETS

ROBBIE WILLIAMS/ MICHAEL BUBLÉ TRIBUTE NIGHT



This was organised by Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust and held in The Jeff Burnlees Suite at Shielfield Park on Friday, 24th October, with all tickets for the event sold out more than two weeks before it was held.

Those who attended enjoyed the performances of David Donnelly-Kay who devoted the first part of the show to Canadian singer Bubl , singing all his hits and best known songs like "Come Fly With Me", "Home" and "Crazy Love".

At the interval break, a raffle was drawn by Berwick Rangers club chairman Brian Porteous and an Irish Bingo was held. Many thanks to those who donated prizes for the raffle.

The second half of the show started with the appropriately titled Robbie Williams song "Let me Entertain You" which David Donnelly-Kay certainly did. Again the performer sung all of Robbie's greatest hits which thrilled the packed audience saving probably his most popular song "Angels" for the encore.

All in all, it was a hugely successful evening with £260 being raised for Trust funds that will be used for the benefit of Berwick Rangers Football Club, and the club itself making a substantial amount from bar takings on the night.

YOUTHFUL INITIATIVE PAYS OFF

Using his initiative paid off for Berwick Rangers' Development League goalkeeper Nils Bleakley. Nils lives in Haddington and was playing for Haddington Athletic's amateur team. Realising that Berwick Rangers were training locally and unlike his own team, employed a specialist goalkeeping coach (Craig Wight), the 17 year old approached Rangers and asked if he could train with them.

Things moved on from there. Berwick played him as a trialist in three matches before he was formally registered ahead of the November 26th match with East Stirlingshire at Ochilview. There, he was in top form making more than half a dozen great saves, the best, a seemingly impossible one-handed effort to deny Billy Vidler at close range.



Nils' first game was at Dalkeith against a strong Livingston side and though understandably nervous in his debut match, could not be faulted for any of Livi's three goals. He also played in a 2-all draw against Raith Rovers at Shielfield and in a 4-2 friendly victory on home plastic against Haddington Athletic Juniors before signing forms.

Nils was born in Frankfurt am Main in Germany to a Scottish father and German mother. He moved to his dad's home town when he was five. As well as playing football, he is currently studying for Highers at Knox Academy in Haddington.

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