

# BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS TRUST

## New Era...

## The passion remains

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



# Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust

Magazine No. 34  
August 2019



**Address:**  
c/o 10 Golden Square  
Berwick-upon-Tweed  
Northumberland  
TD15 1BG

**Telephone:** 01890 860329

**Fax:** 01289 306980

**E-Mail:**  
trust@berwickrangers.org

[fb.com/berwickrangerstrust](https://www.facebook.com/berwickrangerstrust)

[twitter.com/berwickrst](https://twitter.com/berwickrst)

**Chairman:**  
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**Vice-Chairman:**  
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**Secretary:**  
Isla Barber

**Treasurer:**  
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**Membership Secretary:**  
David Letham

**FC Board Representative:**  
John Bell

**Media Manager:**  
Brendan Thorburn

**Committee Members:**  
Ronald Kirk  
Stuart Lee

**Designed &  
Published by:**  
InHouse Design

**Editor:**  
Andrew Allan

**Photography:**  
Ian Runciman

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN...



The previous Trust Chairman, who's comfortable loafers I am still trying very hard to fill; and falling short more often than not, was never one to be unjustifiably delighted; nor comfortable for others to proclaim such a state of euphoric rapture, when it was most likely inappropriate.

In that context, may I say that I am indeed delighted; not only to be leading an organisation like the Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust, but that the key stakeholders of The Club

have licked wounds and are making strides into a new phase of Glasnost, where there is increased collaboration with common objectives being discussed and planned.

To elaborate, after the changes in The Club Board, Supporters Club Board and our Trust Board, I'm one of three new Chairmen of each body who, along with our relative Board members, started that collaboration on 24th June on behalf of all supporters and members of both supporter entities, at the first, of a planned regular rhythm of pan board meetings. I feel privileged to be part of this triumvirate group and have an opportunity to work with my brilliant Trust Board colleagues to help build our future with John Bell and Matty Moor's teams.

That's not to say that there's the merest sensation of pleasure when I, or anyone, reflect on our recent past; not only our fall from the SPFL, but also losing Pea Oliver from our mortal coil. I'm just not sure how a season could have gone any more badly. However, those who may be getting to know me; treasuring Pea's memory aside, will see that I'm driven by looking forward; an optimist, dreamer and A Believer of better days ahead for our club.

That belief is not blind as my personal experience, through proudly being asked to join The Club's Operations Group, is that there is real and honest hard work being done to positive effect. Like others who have been asked and accepted the challenge, I willingly share my skills and experience to help The Club; mine having been as a Facilities Manager, during which I built planned maintenance regimes, assured statutory property H&S compliance in freehold and leasehold portfolio and had a sixth sense for what makes a well-made pie. Catering services were also my 'thing'; as was passionate and regular hands-on quality control: again, anyone who's met me may suspect some culpability for who ate all the pies...

The Operations Group have skills and drive that will stabilise the clubs finances, own and lead each strand of the clubs strategic plan and drive us towards a better future with no agenda other than 'I'm not thinking what The Club can do for me, it's what I can do for our Club'; JFK had it right. My pledge is to fully understand what we must do to maintain our ground, and minimise the investment to do that, whilst improving our supporter experience. This will provide a steadily improving foundation of a community-based football club which will be attractive to invest in, and ultimately improve our team and it's performance.

This season will tell us how competitive we are against our Lowland League peers, and what the delta looks like that we have to close

to return to the SPFL. In Yano and Kevin, we have two strong and experienced people, steeped in our club history and with a deep passion to succeed; again not for personal motivations, but to improve the future of our club. I'll not dwell on what early season has looked and felt like; the contributors to our first magazine of the season have done that wonderfully well and I hope you enjoy reading their thoughts and reflection as much as I have.

I hope you enjoy this 34th edition of the Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust magazine; my first as editor, so please be gentle with me. My sincere thanks to Gordon Dickson, Ron Kirk, David Spence, Stuart Lee, Brendan Thorburn, David Letham and John Bell who are volunteer Trust Board Members for their hard work, Isla Barber for her work as our Secretary.

Heartfelt thanks also to Michael Smyth for his work as past Trust Chairman and to Ian Beresford and Bill Purvis for their work as Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectively. May I also thank The Pilot Inn in Low Greens for kindly hosting our Trust Board Meetings.

Finally, my sincere thanks again to all the people who contributed articles and last, but not least, all our Trust Members for your continued support and all fans of Berwick Rangers Football Club for your love of our club and optimism.

I feel we have much to look forward to; if you'd like to join The Trust to join and directly support our evolution, please use this link and become the 12th man.

[www.berwickrangers.org/sample-page/contact](http://www.berwickrangers.org/sample-page/contact)

# A VIEW FROM DAVID LETHAM, FOUNDER OF ST ANDREWS BERWICK RANGERS SUPPORTERS.

Well it's been quite a ride over the last few months, I'm sure it will be mentioned several times throughout this issue of the magazine; it's time to move forward though. We are where we are and yes, it's disappointing, but it's not really a surprise. Now we are in the Lowland League I don't expect to get out of it in a hurry.

The league is getting stronger and there is some serious cash being spent by other teams. I would be content with a top 5 finish, I believe that is a realistic expectation. There will of course be people expecting Berwick to win the league and gain promotion back into league 2; I would be delighted if that happened but I'm not holding my breath. Berwick have been struggling at the bottom of league 2 for a number of years, as is the case for a lot of teams in a lot of divisions; we just happen to be one of the bottom dwellers. I'll not gain any fans for saying it but that's how I feel.

There are many different opinions on how to move forward, but it seems that very few actually want to get involved, despite all the comments on social media. Few seem to understand what is required, and how much work and effort goes in to running a football club. Perhaps the club need to communicate this to the fans to give an idea of perspective. We are compared to club X.Y and Z but we are not them, we don't have a millionaire sitting on the doorstep with a suitcase full of cash.

Berwick are, and will always be, a "player island", finding it hard to attract players from the North and the south, competing against the many clubs out there who can offer a similar wage but substantially less travel. We

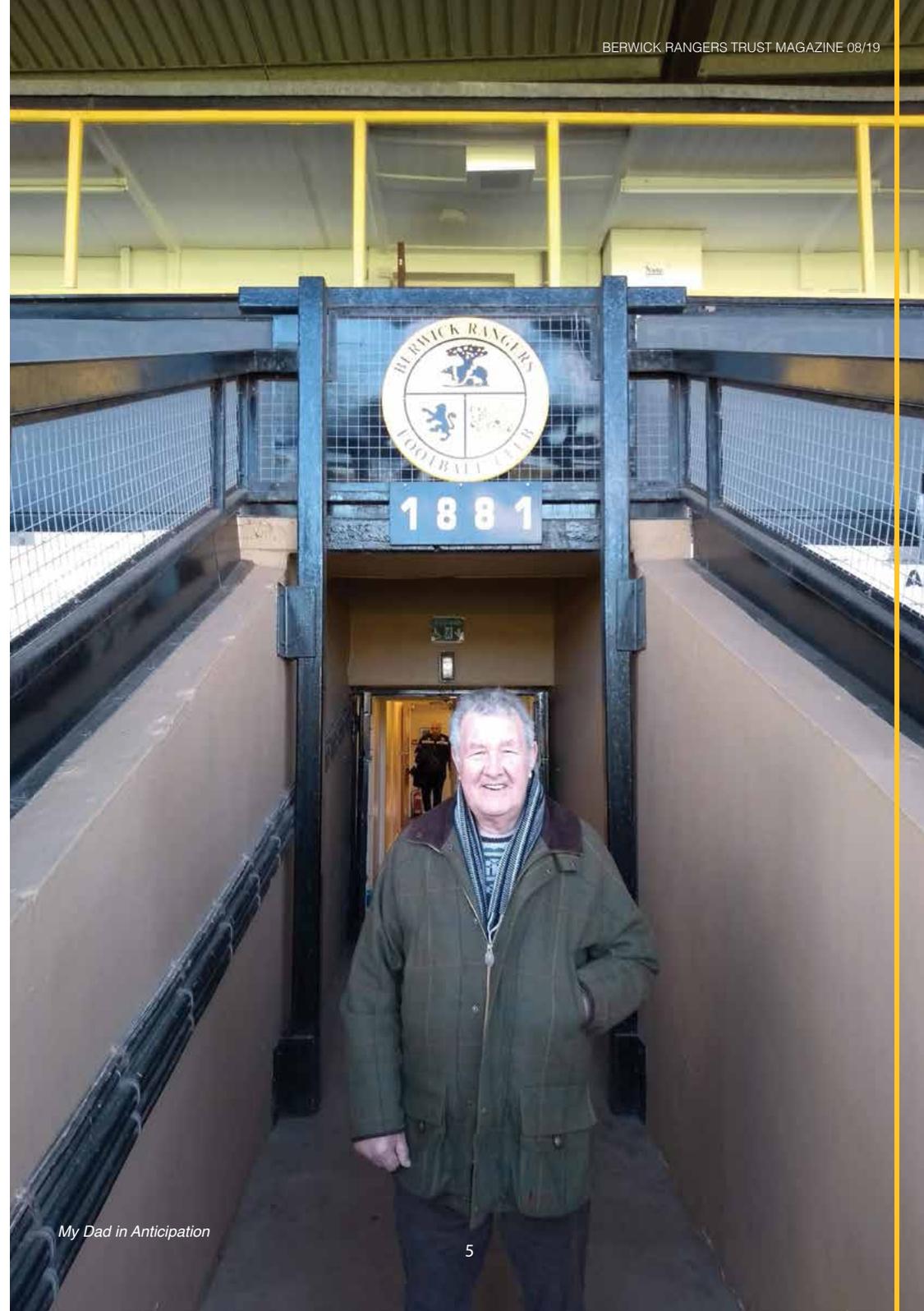
also compete against the many local teams, whose players are happy to play for, train less and still have a few beers at the weekend without offering the full commitment required to a club at Berwick's level.

Despite it all, I'm looking forward to a few different teams visiting Shielfield. I'm now over the initial shock and disappointment of relegation and looking forward to the new season. The league structure in Scotland is in need of an overhaul; 10 team leagues really aren't great. Playing teams 4 times a season, season after season takes its toll. This season has seen a change of 3 teams out of 10 in league 2 though. A couple of new faces for a change, Cove Rangers winning promotion and Brechin plummeting down the leagues. The familiar face of Stenhousemuir joins league 2 again this season though.

Throughout this turmoil, St Andrews Berwick Rangers Supporters are keen to try and support the club however we can. For season 2019/20 we will be paying to keep the advertising board in the stadium, an advert in the program, sponsoring Sean Brennan's kit and we will have another end of season award. There will no doubt be other support as the season progresses.

Last season we presented an end of season award, this time to Lewis Barr. Lewis has performed well this season, despite the results, and we are happy to see him stick with the club. We also paid for gloves for the reserve team keeper. You can visit our blog on our website for more information.

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



*My Dad in Anticipation*

# OPTIMISM TO REALISM

by **STUART BELL**

The anger cycle is complete.

## DENIAL

"We beat Peterhead so can beat anyone. And Ouzu will be back soon"

## ANGER

"Sack the Board. Sack Harvey. Sack the fans. Sack Ouzu's physio. Sack my Grandma. Sack everyone in the world"

## BARGAINING

"Harvey is only human, give him a break. Maybe if he moved Forbes into midfield and Hume into the chip van?"

## DEPRESSION

"We're doomed, Mr. Mainwaring. Sell Shielfield to Lidl"

## ACCEPTANCE

"I'll still go, but £10? They're having a laugh"

So that was it. 39 Years of watching Berwick Rangers in the SPFL was over and we were ushered into the cupboard in the basement marked 'Lowland League'.

Now, maybe I should be more careful with my money, but I was actually happy to pay the £10 - despite the perverse stab in the back that raising the concession age by 5 years means that I now have to pay 2 quid extra for non-league football. (Even George Osborne would have phased that in...)

The removal of Johnny Harvey and much of his useless team, some judicious sweeping of the cobwebs from the Boardroom and the return of Yano and big bad Haynesy, lifted the spirits. The notion that I would never again have to pay good money to watch Declan O'Kane trying to thread a pass through to Ahmed Aloulou with his eyes closed and his



*Lewis Barr in a tussle against University of Stirling*

boots on the wrong feet, followed 3 seconds later by an own goal from Bob Wilson, meant I approached the Shielfield turnstiles on 3rd August with renewed hope and a smidgeon of vigour.

Reports from the 3-5 defeat to Bonnyrigg the previous Tuesday suggested that we had a raw but talented young team that would need a little time to gel. We had a few key players missing too and Bonnyrigg are a decent bunch of vicious, whingeing, cloggers that know each other well and are well organised by our old boss Robbie Horn. So, a 3-5 defeat represented a step forward, especially since we scored goals for the first time since Sean Brennan last got within 3 yards of a penalty.

I didn't share the idea that the University of Stirling would be a pushover because the students would all be in Malaga but I did expect us to win. But alas, I was soon back at the anger stage. Central defenders who couldn't beat Jimmy Krankie in the air, hopeless refs, and a masterclass in fruitless huffing and puffing. Same old, same old.

We were awful. And then I left my phone on a bench at Berwick Station, was lucky that

nobody nicked it, and had to buy another train ticket and come back up on the Sunday. With beer and chips it cost £100 just to have the stuffing knocked out of me all over again.

But hey, good to catch up with old chums, my bit of terracing was happy to see me, the pitch looked great, the pub was grand and my jumbo haddock was luscious, so still a cracking day out apart from the fuddy.

I'm not back at depression yet. We've signed an experienced centre-back, built like a fridge freezer (I'd have been throwing money at Steve Notman, but Miller could be a top signing), and we have a forward who is not afraid to break with convention and have the occasional shot (not afraid to break anything else either judging by his tackling skills). There are a couple more key players still to come back too, so I won't write off the season just yet.

Hasten to add though, this was written before the Gretna game...



*New signing Yaw has a crack at goal*

# THE C9 FOUNDATION

by COLIN CRAWFORD



## Foreword by Andrew Allan:

*I was very pleased indeed when Colin, founder of the C9 Foundation, contacted me to offer an article for The Trust magazine. Increased awareness of mental health is an important subject for me, and for parents of young people where symptoms can be missed or misunderstood with tragic consequences. My thanks to Colin from all at Berwick Rangers Supporters Trust and we wish you continued success with your charitable efforts to spread knowledge and awareness of the support available for people with mental health issues.*

The C9 Foundation is a Scottish registered charity (SC048991), set up to tackle Mental Health within grassroots football. The Foundation aims to create more conversations about Mental Health, through playing football, and hosting coaching nights, in which we will teach communities what Mental Health is, signs to look out for, and how they can help or where to get more professional help.

We have football teams playing under the charity name, in which we will be able to reach other teams, through games, and begin conversations with them, surrounding Mental Health. Our teams give us an "in" with others, and have allowed us start the conversations with more ease with players, managers and coaches alike.

On Sunday 23rd June, we were invited along by Andy Thorpe and the Scottish Borders Seniors Football Club, to play two fundraising matches at Shielfield Park. The SBS are a partner team to the charity, and were to play our amateur team for the first Berwick & Borders Charity Cup. Our Reserves team

were to play the Men United select side, a team put together of players and coaches from 11 of the local grassroots teams. The day was a huge success, all thanks to Andy and his team, along with local help and sponsors in Berwick Rangers and the Supporters Club, Lock Stock & Burgers, Tesco, Peter Watson & Kev Bolton, Barn At Beal, Laura & Amy (Masseuses), Ross Aitchison (Groundsman),



*The half time presentation on Saturday 27th August by Andy Thorpe to members of C9 Foundation*

Andy Rooney (Ref) and George Thompson (Announcer) to name but a few.

The games were played in the correct manner, with everyone enjoying the occasion, and the C9 Foundation feeling welcomed in to the community. To raise £1030 was an amazing feat, and the funds will go towards setting up even more Mental Health coaching nights.

If you want to know more about The C9 Foundation, their work or how you can help, please follow the link to their website.

[www.c9foundation.com/blog/2019/3/14/c9-foundation](http://www.c9foundation.com/blog/2019/3/14/c9-foundation)

# AS ONE DOOR OPENS

by ANDREW ALLAN

I'm becoming closer to our club through offering to help on match days; something I wanted to do for a long time, but never stepped forward for; not really knowing too many people, who to approach nor how. I don't get out much.

In fact, the only person I really got to know was the guy who occasionally drove the under 20's mini bus all over the country on typically horrible and bleak Monday nights; our first meeting being in sheeting rain at Ochilview; where there was no view of any Ochils; nor much visibility of the pitch through the driving rain. Only some time later did I realise that Peter's alternate to be a Club Director, and our now Chairman, John Bell. Peter being another unheralded star of the club.

I was asked at the start of the season if I could help out on the door, after my debut on the turnstiles perhaps giving some indication that my social ineptitude may not preclude my fulfilling some role at the club. May I say, having been pressed into service again recently, I really enjoy the chat on turnstiles with the folks happy to have a bit of chat about the club fortunes, life, the universe and everything.

As Andre La Porte, I've really seen the inner workings of match day. I was given in inkling as a recent nomination to the club Operations Group, due to my apparent enthusiasm to



help and my background in all things Facilities Management, from structural repair schemes to staff restaurants; I'm looking forward very much to providing the first draft design of a stack of scotch pies. My first Ops Group was focused on match-day prep, roles and responsibilities; so I knew the script, just not the actors and how the cast worked (and occasionally ad-libbed) together to produce a perfect match day film.

Typically around two hours before kick-off, our brilliant band of volunteers start mustering bringing life to the team back-room and checking roles and timings for stewarding, the 1881 bar, upstairs hospitality, turnstiles, match-ball retrieval team; all checked in at the door. Players and officials arrive, complimentary tickets are dropped off for pick-up at the turnstiles, visiting directors and hospitality guests, press & media folks and scouts then start arriving, along with the statutory medical team. Man, this is an operation!

All this time, the unflappable lynch-pin of the club, our unique and brilliant Football Secretary, Dennis McCleary, sits cross-legged, levitating Yoda-like above his desk, calmly offering Zen pre-emptive prompts to the starry-eyed volunteers. 'West Ham scout he is Andrew; in for a pie at halftime he will come', as he slowly waves his arm and

(another) Tunnocks Caramel Wafer floats out of the box and over towards his also levitating tea-mug.

My doyens of immeasurably regular, patient advice and guidance in my new (allegedly temporary) role; besides Dennis, have been Rodelle, Sean, Helena and Lyndsay; with the latter two ladies giving me the most patience and just great banter more regularly than they most politely never mention. My thanks to all.

I make light of all this for a good reason; because it's brilliant fun! And, boy is it interesting. Like the turnstile position, and life in general, if you're interested in people, you have such richly rewarding conversations.

Another reason is, that I just can't understand why we aren't overrun with match day volunteers; seeing our club from the inside-out is a fantastic opportunity, a privilege to be in a natural position to speak to so many visitors to Shielfield and enjoy a part of match day not many know exists: and you still see the game!

Please, get in touch. You won't be disappointed.

[www.berwickrangers.com/  
can-you-volunteer-at-shielfield](http://www.berwickrangers.com/can-you-volunteer-at-shielfield)

# WELL THAT WAS HARD WORK!

by MICHAEL CONBOY

As the sun moves slowly from left to right, it starts to break through the leaves and branches of the overhanging tree; it's a weekday afternoon in the middle of May, and it is most uncharacteristically hot. An early escape from the office, I find myself in the garden in contemplation mode with a cold beverage courtesy of Luigi Moretti.

All is quiet and still, apart from the birds singing in the trees and flying overhead. The garden attracts mainly Goldfinch, Coal and Blue tits, plus the usual suspects, Sparrows, Black Birds and Pigeons. I have been lucky enough to see a Male Bulfinch fleetingly.

I have been wandering in and out of the house frantically trying to revive my summer reading mojo. The task entails bringing out music and football books and piling them on the table at the side of me, like a stand in school teacher desperate to get back into the classroom.

A clatter of metal as the table tipples over and all the books hit the patio floor, so back to reality...

Unfortunately (or fortunately!) I'm in a state of footballing limbo, whereas usually the season would be done and dusted, fate having been cast; moving forward into the Summer months with a kick of the heels and a spring in the step, despite what had unfolded during the season.

But this is not the case as at the time of writing; tomorrow evening the mighty whites play the 2nd leg of the Championship playoff against Derby at the fortress that is Elland Road, going into this leg with a 1 goal advantage, the thinking would be to get an early goal to double the score line, and defend with the hope of a chance to counter attack and score

on the break.

I watched and celebrated the win at my oldest mate's house, having known him since I was 16 years old, so games like this meaning a lot to both of us. On arrival I was faced with a sheepish look and the confession that he doesn't have Sky Sports, due to some "technical" issues. Various options are banded about; go to the local pub, which isn't that local! Watch on a mobile phone, which is impractical, unless like myself you are long sighted and mobile phone screen viewed with out spectacles on is like watching television after having laser eye treatment.

While the sands of time were rapidly running out, we eventually decided to buy a Sky Sports day pass for Sky Sports for £8.99; subscribed and paid for, we tune in and get set up. Pre match and the nerves are jangling, a couple of beers calm the nerves of what is building up to be a long 40 minutes before kick off of this the 1st leg of the play offs.

"Rum, Sodomy and The Lash" that cuts into the start of what was being a well formed paragraph; ears prick up to a later song on the now legendary album "Body of an American" as we wait patiently for the teams to be announced. Here we go on our way to the Premier League, a lyrical quote never so fitting from a song about a boxer "He never threw a fight, when a fight was so right, so they sent him to war": Shane McGowan, 1986.

I keep feeling a nudge and a push on my leg; as I look down I see my mates 3 year old son looking up at me, grinning, clutching a plastic football. He doesn't need to say anything, his vocabulary limited anyway as he is only three. The proverbial mist clears and the mental and spiritual clarity is almost mockingly



overwhelming! We start passing the ball backwards and forwards to each other his little grin widening as he gets more involved with his ball kicking skills.

Out of who-knows where; well, the corner of the sofa, a flash of black and white Border Collie skids across the carpet for an unexpected (and very suspect) sliding tackle. Luckily he doesn't burst the football with his teeth, not something you would hear associated with the modern professional game.



*A moment of despair*

As the dog hairs and carpet settle from the sliding tackle, what strikes me most, is the sheer joy and sparkle in the young boys eyes; like a blank canvas free from the pressures of wealth, peer pressure and expectations that are often associated with football, just a young boy kicking a ball around for the absolute fun of it. I later found out he goes to a kids football training session on a Sunday morning, where he is slightly struggling with the concept of team work! But at 3 years old he has plenty of time to work on that.

So back to the play off 2nd leg and news has emerged that Roofe is injured and won't be fit to play, which is never great news, but even more distressing when going into such a crucial game! The scene is set, Cold beer – check, Roasted peanuts – check, nerves of steel – unchecked!! The teams emerge on to the pitch and the whistle is blown, 24 minutes

in and Dallas taps a goal in off a post rebound header from Cooper! 1 nil Leeds; 2 nil on aggregate!!

All was looking good as we head into the 44th minute until an almost comedy sketch mix up between Cooper and the keeper Casilla – goal to Derby; 2-1.

Teams back out after half time break, one of my roasted peanuts nuts crashes onto the living room floor and, as I swoop down to retrieve it, Mason Mount scores after only 46 minutes: 2-2. Next time I will leave that solitary peanut to suffer in silence!

Within 15 minutes Derby get a penalty 2-3, my nerves are not cut out for this. But then, after 62 minutes, Dallas scores to level the scores on aggregate; once again level: 3-3.

My heart rate returns to an acceptable level as we head into the 80th minute still on 3-3. I'm resigned now to extra time if needed, so beer refilled (again); I seem to have refilled after every flash point and goal. Peanuts are all but gone, but suspect many of them will be taking cover underneath the sofa for extra time...

The final nail in Leeds promotion dreams comes in the 85th minute from Jack Marriot. That's it then. Another season in the Championship beckons.

I now really don't want to say anything else on the subject; yeah, bottles gone, and in my defence I would like to thank Bielsa for a truly brilliant season, which brought families, friends and communities together. I'm a paid up member of the Leeds United Supporters Trust, and they have done some wonderful work over the course of the season, most notably their work with match day food bank collections, really great work!

So back to my footballing state of limbo, and synergy with the thorn in my side, Berwick Rangers; I can't relax and sign off for the Summer if I wanted to. Unfortunately there is one more game of football that means a lot

to me, in small English coastal town on the Scottish Borders. Tin hats have been shot to hell through lack of defence, and inability to score goals consistently.

A heavy run of defeats and Berwick Rangers find themselves in a dog-fight for survival to stay in the Scottish Football league. Problem is Cove Rangers are 4 nil from the first leg! Surely Berwick can't do the impossible, and turn this relegation play off around and be the talking point in the Leaping Salmon, The Barrels and The Curfew this evening; such fantastic venue's offering excuses for many a Sunday hangover in this picturesque Borders town. Sore heads queuing down the High Street at the commercial branded Coffee Shops.

I have managed to get to a few home games this season, but unfortunately my support will be from the comfort of my own home for this game; keeping up with the action via various media platforms such as Twitter, Sky Bet and Flash Scores. I always have a small wager on Berwick to win, usually as part of some kind of accumulator, more of a tradition rather than a money making exercise; lets just say I traditionally lose!

A few minutes before kick off I am set up with my mobile phone and various tablets, not wanting to miss any of the action unfolding across different media.

Cove score after just 9 minutes, is this it the opening of the floodgates? Can the hope only be now that we don't concede so many goals it ends up like a Rugby score! Red and perished knuckles knocking on the door of the Scottish Lowland League.

As the first half progresses, the gates of the flood seem to abate; a yellow card for Rose and a straight red for Brown sees the half come to an end with just the one goal conceded.

So as it stands, after 45 minutes, Cove are leading 5 nil and seem to have secured a place in the 4th tier of Scottish football for

next season; hats off to them, with a wince of sadness.

Second half. After 47 minutes, it's another goal to Cove, hardly enough time for the Berwick lads to pull their socks up and compose themselves!

You guessed it, this doesn't end well for Berwick they concede a final goal after 75 minutes, I will let you do the maths on the final score over the 2 legs.

To add insult to injury the manager has been sacked and board members seem to now be dropping like flies, as a shareholder I will always stay loyal to the cause!



*Will we, won't we?*

The months have rolled on, and I've picked this article up again at the start of July. I was going to draw a line under "things" here, but as we dive head first into the pre-season friendlies, Berwick have their first win since the tremendous victory over Peterhead back in March. A 2 nil win against Coldstream at Shielfield is a great start.

With a smile on my face and confidence levels growing ever so slightly, I have been writing down all the fixtures and marking them up with a bright yellow high-lighter in my diary. First final score entry "2-0 WIN" to Berwick!

**Footnote** - for those interested, I did have a 6 fold accumulator on, and ironically they all lost apart from Berwick!!

# SOCIAL MEDIA INSTEAD OF ANTI-SOCIAL MEDIA

by **DEREK BELL**

20 May 2019, two days after Berwick Rangers suffered the final humiliation of a long season, a 3 – 0 home defeat to Cove Rangers having confirmed that we would no longer be a Scottish League club. A long inexorable decline that seemed to start almost the moment Ian Diack scored 'that' goal. We left the league a club in tatters on a wave of criticism, bile and vitriol.

Obviously, there could be no better time to launch a new social media page on the club and obviously there could be no-one better placed to do this than someone who hadn't been to a match for years through a combination of disillusion and personal circumstance.

Yet that's exactly what happened. My disillusionment with Berwick and to a certain extent with Scottish football really started with the Rangers saga, I didn't like the way it was handled and I didn't agree with the decision to parachute them into the league, albeit whilst understanding the commercial reasons for doing so. It wasn't helped by what seemed to me a lack of any ambition at the club and so I drifted. I started to find things to do on a Saturday afternoon. By last season I was starting to miss live football, but life interfered and Saturday afternoons became busy for other reasons. However, as the season progressed I was being drawn right back into the car crash of the season that was developing at Shielfield. I was rubbernecking Johnny Harvey's interviews with a growing sense of disbelief at the levels of delusion.

After the final nail I found myself becoming increasingly annoyed and frustrated by many of the anonymous posts on Pie and Bovril. I didn't necessarily disagree with them all but there were too many people fighting personal battles and personal agendas. The future of the club was at stake and folk seemed more interested in internecine war. What we needed was somewhere that was open and transparent which would still allow fans to express views. Somewhere that would force people to come out from under their Harry Potter style cloak of anonymity. I've thought about doing stuff on the web before but struggled to even come up with a title let alone start something. For some reason a title came to me and suddenly I had something to run with.

The easiest place to start seemed to be a Facebook group, I was a member of a few football and music ones, and it couldn't be that hard to set one up could it? A quick check confirmed there was no page for Berwick Rangers fans and a further check confirmed it wasn't too difficult to set up. From that NewBlackAndGoldDream was born. A bit of mucking about on the internet and I had a logo. I was aware that the secret to a successful page was content so I had to try and think of somethings that would help keep members checking the page, not necessarily easy in close season.

I had no idea how it would be received. Why would anyone want to be part of it, I wasn't that well known, and I wasn't even going to games so who the hell was I to stick my nose in. You must invite someone when you set up a group, fortunately I had a good friend who remained strongly connected to the club and had friends he may invite. A quick mention on Pie and Bovril to test the waters and wait. What stunned me was the speed the member requests came in and the group was up and running.

Ground rules were set out but there was still a lot of anger and some of the agendas and

backbiting showed face in the early days. However, a brief statement of intent and what the group was about has led to that ending. Members still disagree on things and it will always be that way and it should be. The group isn't about stifling debate and argument.

It turned out that having created the page I realised that I wanted to offer more and thinking like a true social media influencer I suddenly became concerned about protecting the 'brand'. I wanted to provide more long form articles, expand beyond Shielfield and look at the whole Lowland scene. I realised that like me many fans probably knew very little about the League and the clubs in it. So, the next step would be to set up Twitter and Instagram accounts, if only to stop someone else doing so. But what about a website? This was something I knew nothing about. A bit of research and a few false starts later and there it was a shiny brand-new website.

Three months later and we are sitting with over 250 members and it has remained an open group so others may be dipping in and out. The Twitter account is building while the Instagram one remains under used principally because I'm not putting up enough content. I'm not monitoring the website traffic too much but if nothing else it provides a good way of writing content for the group. What I wasn't prepared for was the number of hours it would take up. It has essentially become a full-time job on top of my actual full-time job. I've learnt more about non-league football in Scotland than I thought possible or thought I wanted to know.

I think the whole project has been a success, fans seem to be engaging with the various aspects of what I like to call my global media empire. My hope is that even those who don't comment enjoy what they read. There's still a long way to go especially in terms of the website but it will continue to develop.



# THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW

by **RON KIRK**

Well, folks, it happened. The relegation trapdoor opened and Rangers didn't just fall through it, they crashed through it like an asteroid colliding with the earth's surface in one of these modern day disaster movies. Indeed, as the new season kicks off, and with Rangers losing streak continuing, it looks like the asteroid is still continuing its descent through the earth's core with no imminent sign of it coming to a rest. To put it into context, since defeating Peterhead on 19 March, at the time of writing, Rangers have lost 16 consecutive competitive games conceding 59 goals in the process and only managing to score 5 in reply. Let's be honest, this scenario, a bit like the events in the movie, *The Day After Tomorrow*, has been coming and has been so well before last summer's boardroom debacle which saw the then manager, Robbie Horn, deprived of a competitive playing budget.

However, let's rewind and have a look back at where it

all went wrong for Rangers during the second half of last season. I think that I concluded my mid-season review in the last newsletter by adding a footnote that I had just had the misfortune to witness the 7-1 defeat against Queens Park at Hampden. In my view, Manager Johnny Harvey should have been given his P45 there and then. Easy to say now, but those who know me will tell you that that was my view at the time. Two things looked evident to me that day. The players didn't look as if they were playing for the manager and some of them looked way out of their

depth. Heavy defeats had been sustained prior to that game and several were sustained thereafter. 6-0 at Annan for instance where the team simply crumbled after having been level at half time. Harvey achieved the almost impossible task of making the poor team he inherited even worse. The players he brought in, with the possible exception of Lewis Barr, were way out of their depth. To compound matters, he moved on experienced players of League 2 calibre in the shape of Jamie Todd, Gary Phillips and Paul Willis to League



*Tough times against Albion Rovers*

2 rivals. Gary Phillips' exuberant celebration, after netting Albion Rovers second goal in their 3-0 win at Shielfield which consigned Rangers to bottom spot and the relegation play-off, said it all.

Unfortunately, the mind set around Shielfield last season seemed to be that we would be ok as no matter how bad we were, Albion Rovers were worse and would finish below us. That mind set was still evident at the beginning of March when Rangers rescued a point and maintained their 7 point advantage over Rovers

by grabbing a late equaliser at Coatbridge. Some seemed to think that by avoiding defeat the job was done and we would be ok, but the whole picture was turned on its head less than a week later, when Rovers were awarded 3 points after having their defeat at Clyde a few weeks earlier overturned to a 3-0 win after the Cumbernauld side had fielded an ineligible player. The announcement was made on a Saturday morning and, duly boosted, Rovers then won at Elgin, thereby picking up 6 points in one day and slashing the deficit to just two points after Rangers drew at home to Cowdenbeath on the same day.

However, Rangers reopened the gap to 5 points with an astonishing 2-0 home win over league leaders and eventual champions

Peterhead; a result which some proclaimed at that time had retained the club's league status. Sadly, it wasn't to be as Rangers failed to register another point, or indeed a goal, and a rejuvenated Rovers picked up ten points out of 12 at one stage and duly eased past Rangers to finish 8 points clear at the end. What would have happened if the Clyde result hadn't been overturned we will never know, but they were clearly boosted by that decision. To their credit they took advantage of their good fortune and kicked on and, to be fair to them, they had been showing signs of turning things round beforehand.

Having finished bottom, Rangers were left facing a buoyant Cove Rangers side who had won the Highland League by scoring close to 100 goals, and losing only one game in the process. The Rangers Board decided to make one last roll of the dice by relieving Johnny Harvey of his duties and appointing John Brownlie and Ian Little, to oversee the team

during the play-off games. Unfortunately the hope for new managerial bounce failed to materialise, as Cove cantered to a 7-0 aggregate win, thereby consigning Rangers to life in the Lowland League. In truth, a combined managerial team of Pep Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp would have struggled to have made any impact, and Cove are tipped by many to storm to the League 2 title this season.



*Manager Ian Little has begun to attract some new faces*

As I said in the opening paragraph above, this scenario has been coming for some time. In previous newsletter reviews/previews, I have constantly commented on the fact that Rangers had lost the ability to attract players of sufficient quality to sustain a consistent challenge to move

up to the next level. In reality, the quality of players recruited by Rangers over the last 3-4 years has in fact declined, which made the club's relegation at the end of last season inevitable. To be fair to the club though, times have moved on, and the mentality and ambitions of players has changed. Unless, you have a financial benefactor who is willing to throw money at players, a bit like Edinburgh City have, then it is difficult to attract players to clubs like Berwick. The days when Berwick and Meadowbank Thistle had the pick of the best players in the Edinburgh area have long since gone.

Players nowadays do not have the same ambition to play for league clubs. Some prefer to play for their local junior clubs, where travelling to training and to away games is not an issue. In addition, some junior clubs can now offer more lucrative contracts than league clubs. Added to that, those players who do have some ambition to play at a higher level



can now strive to achieve that by playing for a club challenging to attain league status through the pyramid system.

Finally, the advent of social media is not helping either. As a consequence, I understand that Berwick currently has a bad reputation amongst the group of players that the club would seek to recruit. Players and their families read things like Twitter and Pie and Bovril. They read the criticism some players at the club are subjected to and, whilst you could argue that they should grow a pair and rise above it, they are just normal blokes who work through the week like you and I, and play football at the weekend as a hobby. They are not in the same league as someone like Paul Pogba, who attracted his fair share of criticism last season, but earns about £300,000 a week to help rise above it.

*A reminder of how hard it can be to retain experienced players*

Whether we like it or not, the fact remains that players are being put off signing for Berwick because of the content of things being posted on these forums.

So what can we expect in the season ahead? The hope is that Rangers can find some consistency and challenge at the top end of the table. Personally, I think it is unlikely that Rangers will challenge the top 3; which are likely to be Kelty Hearts, East Kilbride and East Stirling. It is no secret that those 3 clubs have some financial clout and they have playing squads that would not be out of place in League Two. From Berwick's perspective, my view is that the club needs to rebuild both on and off the pitch. There has been a change in the boardroom and the new Board has to be given time to endeavour to stabilise the ship and take the club forward. Similarly the new management team of Ian Little and Kevin Haynes need to be given time to rebuild the playing squad. There will be no quick fix; it may even get worse before it gets better. I have a feeling that the team will get better as

the season progresses. The team is relatively young and will take time to gel, and respond to the style the management team want to play. The team would benefit from some experience and I understand that at the time of writing the manager is looking to recruit a couple of experienced players.

This season is all about dusting ourselves down and regrouping with a view to building a playing squad that, in time, will enable the club to make a serious challenge to regain its league status. That in itself will not be easy. There are some clubs at this level, who are spending serious money with a view to attaining that goal. In the meantime we just have to try and enjoy the ride, and the experience of visiting new places. At least we won't have the tedium of playing the same clubs 4 times a season! There are also some new cup competitions that the club will be involved in. Who knows, we might have a decent run in one and, dare I say it, we might even win one. Ok, I know, it's time for me to get my coat!

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