

BERWICK UPON·TWEED RECORD OFFICE

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BERWICK RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB

I was asked by Berwick Rangers Football Club to investigate, using records at my disposal, the date that the Club was founded. To do this, I have checked local newspapers – Berwick Advertiser and Berwick Journal - and other sources and have come to the following conclusions :

- From the evidence, it would appear that there are two crucial years which are cited for the formation of the Club – 1881 and 1884. I checked newspapers for both years and found the following evidence :
 - 1 The 1881 newspapers contain no reference to the playing of football in the Borough, particularly at the end of that year around the time of the Eyemouth Fishing Disaster (November 1881). However, this is not positive proof that the sport was not played then in Berwick because both the Berwick Advertiser and the Berwick Journal were concerned with larger events (including the Disaster) and there was no dedicated sports section in the newspaper.
 - 2 The 1884 newspapers do provide evidence of the formation of a football Club which was called Berwick Rangers – see Appendix A and articles in January and February 1884 – but there is an indication that football of some description (Association or Rugby) had previously been played in the Borough prior to that. From reading the articles, it would appear that the Club was formally constituted then with a committee and a specific name which has been carried on to the present day. However, there is further evidence which suggests that although this may be the date that the club was formally constituted, it must have existed prior to that, as seen in later newspapers.

- In the 1901-2 season, Berwick Rangers Football Club celebrated its “Coming of Age/Majority” , suggesting that the game had been played for 21 years as a club. This definitely takes us back to an initial season of 1881 – 1882. In 1901 - 1902, the Club made a lot of this anniversary, arranging an Exhibition Football Match at Berwick between Newcastle United and Celtic which was played on Thursday 13 March 1902. Within the report of the game, there is a short history of the Club (see Appendix B) which includes references to early members of the team and Willie Bald who supported them. At this time, the founding of the Club and initial games would have been within living memory and so, it would be unusual for them to be celebrating the anniversary in the wrong year.
- As well as looking at the newspapers, I also checked the 1881 census returns to see if I could find any of the names of those mentioned in playing at the start. The census was taken around Easter. From the Census, I established that Harry Payne was aged 24, a tailor, living with his parents, George and Mary. He was born in India as his father appears to have been in the Army. Thomas Lindsay was aged 16, listed as a teacher living in the Parade; James Campbell, aged 18, a joiner living in Woolmarket.

From the evidence, it would appear that both dates are correct for the Club. The Club was in existence in the 1881 – 1882 season and playing as a team, probably on an informal basis. Leading on from this, the Club was then officially constituted in January 1884 and given the name “Berwick Rangers Football Club (Association) “ with a committee and treasurer. As there are no surviving records from the Football Club from the 1880s, the newspapers are the evidence that we have to rely on and although they appear contradictory, they are contemporary and therefore closer to the actual events.

Linda Bankier, Berwick Archivist,

December 2013

Sources Checked :

Berwick Advertiser, November 1881; Oct. 1882; Oct/Nov. 1902

Berwick Journal , Jan. Sept – Oct 1883; Jan – March 1884

Berwick Journal , Aug. + Dec 1901

Berwick Journal : Jan. – March 1902

Ancestry Library Edition – 1881 census for England and Wales

APPENDIX A – REFERENCES TO FOOTBALL CLUB

BERWICK JOURNAL

Issue, 10 Jan 1884, page 2 in Seasonal notes to the intention to start a Football Club – written by Veritas.

“I am glad to see that our young men have woken and intend to start a Football Club. I have often before hinted in this column that a club should be started and now that a beginning has been made, it is to be hoped that the matter will be gone the right way about, and we shall soon be able to boast of a first-rate football club. Whether they intend to have an Association or a Rugby Club, is not yet made public but I sincerely hope it will be Rugby.

Issue, 10 January 1884 – article on page 3

FOOTBALL CLUB FOR BERWICK

We are glad to announce that the young men of Berwick have resolved to start a Football Club and it is to be hoped that they will have every encouragement. A meeting was held at Berwick on Monday night last for the purpose of starting a club and turned out very successfully. Office bearers and a committee were elected and a committee was appointed to wait upon the Secretary of the Berwick Cricket Club to try and arrange for the use of the ground. Twenty four young men gave in their names, and if the ground is obtained, as many more have signified their intention of joining. There will be another meeting on Saturday night to hear report from the Committee which it is hoped will be satisfactory.

Issue, 17 January 1884

THE PROPOSED FOOTBALL CLUB

The adjourned meeting to hear a report from the Committee concerning the use of a part of the Berwick Cricket Ground for practice and matches, was held on Saturday evening at Wallace Green. The Committee appointed to meet the Secretary of the Berwick Cricket Club announced that the Cricket Club Committee intended to start a football club themselves, if possible and a meeting is to be held in the King's Arms Assembly Rooms on Friday night, January 18 at eight o'clock for that purpose. The Committee also state that they were invited to join with them. After a few remarks it was resolved to let the matter lie over until the meeting on Friday night to see what might be proposed as regards subscriptions and other matters, In the meantime, it was agreed to call the club the “Berwick Ranger's Football Club (Association)” and ground having been obtained through the kindness of Messers Cowe Bros, fish merchants, it was resolved to begin practice at once. The colours of the club are to be black and orange. Several new names have been handed to the committee for proposal. The first game will take place on Saturday afternoon on the new ground which is situated at the foot of the Greenses, behind the Hospital.

Issue, 24 January 1884

FOOTBALL CLUB - A meeting of those interested in the formation of a football club for Berwick,, was held in the King's Arms Assembly Room, on Friday night. There was a good attendance. Mr H Peters, solicitor was called to the chair. Mr A.L. Miller who along with Mr Geo Moor , represented the Berwick Cricket Club said that the club, was willing if a football club be formed, to give the ground at a reasonable rent. Goal posts were now lying in the cricket house which were used by the last football club in Berwick, and those they would give gratis to the proposed football club, and he also stated that they were willing to do all in their power to promote football in the town. On the motion of the chairman, seconded by Mr T.B. Short, it was unanimously agreed that a club, to be called "The Berwick Football Club" be formed. Some discussion then followed as to whether the Rugby or the Association game should have the preference, and on the motion of Mr Borthwick, Spittal, seconded by Mr John Cowe, it was decided that the game should be played under Rugby rules. A provisional committee consisting of Messers Borthwick, G Bolam, H Nicholson, J Mein, TB Short, R Smith, A E Wrigley with A Steven as Hon. Secretary and treasurer was formed. It was then resolved to start practice as soon as possible , and a meeting of the provisional committee will be held tonight to make the necessary arrangements. Forty members were enrolled at the meeting. *This is the formation of a Rugby Club*

Issue, 7 February 1884, page 4

FOOTBALL – A MEETING OF THE Berwick Rangers Football Club (Association Rules) were held in the club room, Woolmarket, on Monday evening, to hear the secretary and treasurer's report. There was a good attendance. The report was very satisfactory and the club is now fairly started and promises to be very successful. At the meeting it was arranged to have a match on Saturday afternoon first (weather permitting) between teams representing the club. Kick off at half past two. Six new members were proposed. Young men desirous of joining can give in their names to the secretary on the field or at any other time.

APPENDIX B – BERWICK RANGERS COMING OF AGE

BERWICK JOURNAL 26 DECEMBER 1901

SPORTS & PASTIMES

Good luck to Secretary Scott of the Rangers.. The senior club this season celebrates its majority, and that should not be allowed to pass over without a tumult. Twenty one years of football; think ye, is it a full grown man or a puny infant . There have been, true enough, greater days in local football, but there is a lot of the old spirit left, and football for ought I know may have a life in front of it yet. At any rate, I hear that the Secretary has hit upon a way of making the game more notable in the borough, on this interesting occasion. He has secured promises from the Celtic and Newcastle United to play an exhibition game at Berwick, on a Thursday. Unfortunately, neither team could fulfil a Saturday fixture, but even a Thursday would be a great day; and thousands might be drawn to Shielfield. Excursions might be run for the half-day with advantage. It is unnecessary for me to say everything about either of the promised clubs – they are too well known to need comment – and their names would ne magnets to any crowd. A sing song at night would be a memorable windup. I wonder who is the oldest playing member of the Rangers left in Berwick. I am not going to give a prize, so don't all write me in one week

BERWICK JOURNAL , 16 JANUARY 1902

Arrangements have been completed whereby a football match will be played at Berwick , on Thursday March 13 between Celtic and Newcastle United. This great event is to celebrate the coming of age this year of the Berwick Rangers Club....

BERWICK JOURNAL , 6 FEBRUARY 1902 (Sports and Pastimes)

Berwick Rangers claim to be the oldest established football club in the District and in celebration of the Club's Majority, Glasgow Celtic and Newcastle United have been induced to play a match at Berwick in the second week of March. A guarantee fund of £40 is being raised.

BERWICK JOURNAL 13 FEBRUARY 1902

In Pastimes, reference to Berwick sending a player in the past to Everton. And also for Barnsley and Grimsby leagues

BERWICK JOOURNAL 13 MARCH 1902 (Sports and Pastimes)

But despite the fact that football has been popular in the Berwick District for the last quarter of a century there has been no international "kickba" match witnessed in Berwick-upon-Tweed. "Better Late than Never"., however, and it was [a]fitting idea that the Coming of Age of Berwick-upon-Tweed Rangers Association Football Club should be signalled by an international contest in which a distinguished English and a distinguished Scottish Club were to meet on neutral ground. The Clubs arranged for to visit Berwick-upon-Tweed on this

Majority occasion were Newcastle United and Glasgow Celtic and the date fixed was Thursday March 13 – that is this very day.

BERWICK JOURNAL 13 MARCH 1902 – Account of the Game, page 8

THE RANGER'S HISTORY

The Rangers Club was started twenty- one years ago. The inspiration might be said to have come from W. Bald, a stranger who was working in the town at that period. When he mentioned the possibility of a permanent football club, he had many contending elements to consider , the game being then practically unknown in the borough, and doubt being very considerably expressed if such a craze as football would last over a season. The success soon justified the hopes of the promoter, and with Bald at the wheel, the club was launched and the first match played against Alnwick. The Ducal town was then running one of the strongest working men's clubs in the north, and naturally on the Alnwick enclosure, the Rangers went down. It is interesting to give the first team that stripped for the Rangers in a match :

	Patterson	
	H Payne	T Lindsay
W Bald	W Craig	J Gilchrist
J Aird, A Biggs	T Renwick	J Campbell
	D Grant	

Of these, Harry Payne became the Captain a few weeks from the commencement of the Club and held the office for the long period of eight years. T Lindsay who became the Club's first treasurer was like Payne, one of the players for years, and Jas Campbell (the proprietor of the Black Swan) was long a playing member, and a loyal supporter of the Club till the time of his death. J Ord was the first Secretary of the Rangers FC. The Club had up and down times for many years, as it had all through its history; and the regret is that at twenty one it is not so live and kicking as it was in its younger days.