

Scarborough Football Club, Supporters Club History, by Derek Megginson

In January 1924, with Boro struggling near the foot of the Northern League table, a meeting of supporters was called. This meeting resulted in the formation of the official Scarborough FC Supporters Club. It initially had two aims: to raise money to help the football club and to erect some covered accommodation on the Edgehill side of the stadium, opposite the newly built grandstand. This accommodation financed by the Supporters Club covered about eight steps of the terracing, and was a low shed about thirty yards long with a corrugated iron roof.

The Supporters Club's regular donations were greatly appreciated in a decade when Boro first turned professional, changed league membership a couple of times, lost the new grandstand to a disastrous fire in 1927, and won the Midland League in 1929-30. In the 1930s the money-raising efforts of the Supporters Club helped to stave off bankruptcy.

Financial problems re-surfaced many times, and in 1950-51 a "recovery fund" instigated by the Supporters Club raised over £1000 to keep Boro in existence.

Further ground improvements were assisted by the Supporters Club in 1953 and included a large amount of concrete terracing replacing the grassy bank at the Seamer Road end. The Supporters Club then arranged for the erection of what became known as "The Cowshed" or simply "The Shed", a large covered enclosure opposite the main grandstand. The smaller "shed" erected in the 1920s was dismantled and moved to behind the Edgehill Road goal, where it stood until finally "dismantled" once again by Wolverhampton Wanderers supporters in 1987!

Several years later Boro hit severe financial troubles yet again and had to launch an emergency Appeal Fund. According to Steve Adamson's book 'Scarborough Football Club - The Official History', ... "without the sterling efforts of the Supporters Club with its many fundraising schemes, it is doubtful if the club could have survived at Midland League level."

The club's balance sheet in the pre-sponsorship days of the 1957-58 season was particularly revealing: Gate receipts from Midland League fixtures: £4,020 Gate receipts from Cup and friendly games: £1,734 Gates from Reserve games in Yorkshire League: £795 Sales of season tickets: £821 Donations from Supporters Club: £7,100

Between 1954 and 1966, the Supporters Club donated over £100,000 to the club by running raffles, whist drives, dances, and a weekly pools scheme. The Supporters Club also produced and sold the club's matchday programmes and ran the refreshment kiosks. Ground improvements were also partially financed by the Supporters Club, and in 1959 more concrete terracing replaced grass banking at the Edgehill Road end. In 1960 the Supporters Club paid Scarborough Council the £1,500 deposit with which Boro bought back the football stadium which they had been forced to sell to them earlier.

In the 1960s many of the fund-raising functions of the Supporters Club were taken over by the Football Club itself, and the chairman of the Supporters Club, Bob Whelpton, joined the Board of Directors of the Football Club.

The Floodlight Appeal raised £5,000 to enable the Athletic Ground to stage evening matches from 1970, the sale of Boro lottery tickets enabled Boro to become one of the country's wealthiest non-league teams in the later 1970s, and the "Scarborough Flyer" scheme of the 1980s, run via the Club shop in Victoria Road, helped maintain this position. Boro now had a Commercial Department which had taken over the old fund-raising purposes of the Supporters Club. Indeed, even the "social" aspect of the Supporters Club disappeared in 1987 when Boro took the huge gamble to buy a large property in Castle Road, added a bar, snooker room and dance floor and named it The Boro Social Club. This venture was destined to last only five months before closing with disastrous losses.

In fairly recent years, with nobody willing to take on the responsibilities, the Supporters Club slipped painlessly out of existence. Yet when the club hit its darkest days as the new millennium arrived, Boro fan Doug Kendall called an open meeting in the McCain Lounge to discuss its reformation. He did not claim that the Supporters Club would be a success, and he openly admitted that fans would pay the £5 membership more as a sign of faith rather than in hope of getting anything in return, but indeed there were enough fans to get things moving again.

When Doug could no longer continue, Stuart Canvin was voted in as Chairman. Over the past few years, from humble new beginnings, the Supporters Club has gone from strength to strength. The main aim is still, as in 1924, to raise funds to help the football club.

Each season, thousands and thousands of pounds is channelled through the Supporters Club into Scarborough Football Club itself.