

# YOUR VOICE

## HALIFAX TOWN SUPPORTERS' TRUST

JUNE  
2009

PO Box 827, Halifax, HX1 9GB • info@htst.org • Text/Voicemail 07957 697 204 • www.htst.org

### FA Cup visit a huge success

The event proved to be a huge success; not only raising the reputation of the Trust and Halifax Town out in the community, but also by raising money where the Halifax Town Centre of Excellence and our Charity of the Year benefitted.

Almost £1,000 was made on the day, with HTST sharing its profits with Overgate Hospice as part of the charity partnership. The Hospice in Elland was the final venue on an eventful day which started out at Bradford with the entire Centre of Excellence having the opportunity to have their photograph taken with trophy.

All the teams from the U-9s through to the U-19s turned up, kitted out in their Halifax Town training gear, posing for both team photos and individual snaps. Who knows, maybe one day some of those talented young players may get the chance to lift the trophy for real, maybe even with Halifax Town...well we can all dream!

From there the trophy moved onto North Bridge Leisure Centre and its Saturday Morning Disabled Sports Club with around 30 youngsters, and many more adults, waiting excitedly for the cup to turn up.

A break was taken from their fun activities so that photos could be taken with the trophy – no touching though, not that many wanted to once told the cup is insured for £12million pounds!

Next stop was Tesco supermarket in King Cross where Saturday shoppers were able to get close to the famous cup and have their photograph taken with it. It certainly caught the imagination of the shoppers, with many stopping to take a look, before going on their way.



Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of the day was the visit to Calderdale Royal Hospital children's ward.

Both patients and staff were pleased to see the trophy and the Trust handed out goodies which the Football Association had sent up from Soho Square.

Next was Hipperholme & Lightcliffe School where they had invited pupils to bring along their parents for photo opportunities. By the time we got there a huge queue had already

formed, with both young and old eagerly waiting for arrival of the cup. There was a buzz in the sports hall as the children patiently waited their turn to get to the front.

Once our photographer had taken the snap, the photo was ready to take away within seconds.

Finally on to Elland where the Trust and the Cup's security team were welcomed by Overgate Hospice's friendly staff. It didn't take long for a steady stream of staff, friends, family and patients to come and view the cup, with some putting panic into the Security personnel by threatening to lift the famous trophy.



*"Thank you for bringing the cup to visit us and please think of us again for similar events in the future"*

Andy Bemrose  
Director of Sport, Hipperholme & Lightcliffe School

*"We had a lovely evening. Thank you so much for bringing it to the hospice"*

Faye Henderson  
Fundraising Team, Overgate Hospice

### Chair's Report

The recent report by the All-Party Parliamentary Football Group (APFPG) offers the supporters of football clubs, and organisations such as ours, hope for the future well-being of the game.

The APFPG is a group composed of politicians from all political parties and is chaired by Labour MP Alan Keen. Whilst it does not have any power to insist its recommendations be implemented, their word helps add to the current debates about football's direction and its finances.

Mr Keen and the group's other 11 members, including Iain Duncan Smith, the former Conservative leader, concluded that the wider financial crisis lends more urgency to the need for football to improve its governance.

This should be music to the ears of Halifax Town supporters given the experience we had to endure not too long ago with the demise of HTAFC. Whilst the report made a multitude of

recommendations, there were some more relevant to Halifax Town and football at our level.

A big problem David Bosomworth and colleagues faced when trying to bring to a conclusion their takeover of HTAFC was the level of money owed to former directors for loans they had made to the club. Some of these individuals were willing to write off their loan or take a reduced payment whilst others wanted repaying in full. This is a practice which should never be allowed to happen as it is a false investment and does not encourage the director to make sure the club is managed realistically – as we are all too aware. As the report states, this is a practice which should not be allowed because whilst the loan may be an important source of income for a club in the short term, long term all it does is increase the debt.

The APPFG also comment in depth on the involvement of supporters in football and it was something discussed at a recent Football Supporters Federation (FSF) committee meeting which I sit on. There is a great lack of accountability in football – something once again Halifax Town supporters are all too aware of – and a great way to improve this is for supporter representation in the hierarchy. The APPFG recommend that all football clubs have an elected supporters' representative on the board of directors and this is something both Supporters Direct and the FSF are keen to see introduced.

Some people will argue against the practice of having a strong supporter involvement in the governance of football. It should not be forgotten though that some of the biggest football clubs in the world are owned by members including Real Madrid and Barcelona and as the report states, six of the last fifteen Champions League winners have been member owned and run by supporters.

Our experience of supporter representation at Halifax Town is not an great example to use to strengthen the case. HTST was one of the first Trust's in the country to gain an elected representative onto the club board but there were problems experienced. That does not mean we should never look to go there again and instead it should be something all supporters should want to see in the future. Such a relationship has many mutual benefits and only helps strengthen the trust the supporters and community alike have in the club.

Finally, we have been proud of our season long association with the Centre of Excellence and are looking to step up our support next season. I have personally been impressed with the organisation and effort put in by Des Hazel, the coaches and of course Nick Fletcher who is a co-optee on our Society Board.

Our appreciation of the CoE is shared by Simon Denton of ShaymenDownSouth fame, and together we are exploring ways in which we can work together to provide additional financial and logistical support.

Thanks for your continued support of HTST and of course FC Halifax Town. Although it has been a difficult season the commitment shown has been exemplary and a real credit to the club. Enjoy the summer.

*Gavin Butler*

## Overgate's Midnight Walk

Our Charity of the Year is holding its annual 'midnight walk' fundraiser on 12 September 2009. Many members of the Society Board are planning to join the hundreds of mad people plodding the streets of Calderdale, and we are inviting HTST members to join us!

We are offering a free FC Halifax Town scarf and a HTST badge to all members who join us for this 13 mile walk.

Please complete and return the enclosed form to the normal HTST address, together with a cheque for £8 made payable to Overgate Hospice. Closing date for our offer is Friday 14 August 2009, after which all registrations will then be forwarded to Overgate. You can of course register direct with the charity if you prefer.

## AGM

It's almost that time of the year again and we are inviting applications to the Society Board.

This is your chance to help form and progress Trust policy in all areas. Obviously major decisions are put to the membership in the form of a ballot, but there is much to do on a day-to-day basis.

Please see the enclosed nomination form for further details.

## Secretary

The HTST is looking for someone to take over the secretarial reigns of the HTST. Historically the secretary is selected by the Society Board at their first meeting following the AGM, and to date has always been an elected member of the Board.

The secretary's role is to ensure the Society works within its own rules, and looks after the interests of the membership as a whole. Ideally this requires that the secretary should be someone who is independent of the Society Board, as theoretically the Secretary must be able to advise the membership when he or she feels the Board is acting against the interests of the Society.

It is a challenging role and the successful applicant will be given significant responsibility. Full support will be offered and independent training can be arranged.

If you require more information, or are interested in this position, please contact us through the usual channels and we will arrange an informal meeting.

## Commemorative Badge

Halifax Town Supporters' Trust has launched a limited edition lapel badge to commemorate the former Halifax Town AFC, and its 87-years of providing the local community with many highs and lows.

The badges, costing £3 each, can be purchased by sending a cheque or postal order to the usual address.



## Renewals

The HTST moved its member database from an in-house custom database to 3<sup>rd</sup> party software during 2008. The main benefit of doing this was to make the database more accessible and user-friendly for the less computer-savvy amongst us.

An added advantage was that in future we could allow members to update their personal details using an online form over a secure internet connection. For example, members would be able to update their address and contact details. More on this soon.

We rely on the software to tell us when a member is due for renewal. Unfortunately there was a problem with this aspect of the software and as a result we suspended the issue of renewal forms until this could be rectified.

This problem came to light during our own audit of member renewals, and was quickly brought to the attention of the software providers, who have now applied a fix. However, it has become apparent that this issue had resulted in some members not receiving a renewal at the appropriate time.

We are once again in a position to be able to begin issuing renewal forms. Please be assured that no member has suffered financially because of this, and in fact many have had their membership periods extended to compensate.

## Season 2008-2009 Review

*As posted on the [www.htst.org](http://www.htst.org) website 29/4/09*

Halifax Town Supporters' Trust would like to welcome to the club new Manager Neil Aspin. We are sure all supporters will wish him all the very best in achieving the promotion that all supporters crave.

The club's board of directors deserve credit for making such a swift appointment and it is now more important than ever for everybody at the club to pull together to ensure that success – both on and off the field – can be achieved next season.

Some will argue that it was unrealistic to expect promotion at the first attempt, whilst others will feel a second season in the Unibond Division One North as a serious setback. Either way, when the new season begins in August the club will be a year older and much wiser about the challenges that lay ahead.

We should quite rightly mention the supporters for the role they have played this past year. The commitment shown is nothing short of fantastic and to finish the season with an average home crowd of 1100+ speaks volumes of the desire for the club to succeed. It has certainly been an eye opener for many as we experienced new grounds and new opposition and we can rightly be proud that our away support has been magnificent all season.

It is almost a year ago that Halifax Town AFC ceased to exist, at least as a football club. We are all too aware of the negative feeling which continues to blight the Trust, but we would ask supporters to reassess their opinion.

We have worked hard since the birth of FC Halifax Town to promote the club in a positive light through our community work.

We have built a great relationship with Overgate Hospice – our chosen Charity of the Year – and continue to look at how we can strengthen this relationship. The hospice benefitted financially from the visit of the FA Cup and we were delighted with the day as a whole. The feedback we have received from the other organisations involved made it a worthwhile event.

Also as part of our community and youth development remit we are proud to continue to support the Centre of Excellence. Our two organisations have a mutual understanding of how important the development of the best local talent is and to have up to 150 youngsters playing under the Halifax Town banner is something to embrace.

We are extremely delighted to see the organisation go from strength to strength and their results have reflected the hard work which has been put in throughout the last few years. Both the ShaymenDownSouth and ourselves are looking at how we can work together to increase our support of youth development at the club.

We remain keen to work with the club on its development in the community in building the credibility of the club, and the confidence local people, and businesses, have in FC Halifax Town. Peter Stajic has made excellent progress in this regard but as stated in the past there is funding available to us for community-based projects and we hope we can work together with the club next season.

Finally, regardless of what some may say, we must stress that a supporters' trust is not against the private ownership of football clubs. We do however want football club owners to respect the relationship held with its supporters, and not merely view them as customers. Mr Bosomworth has declared in the past that he sees himself as a custodian of FC Halifax Town, so ultimately there is no reason why there can't be a highly transparent management of the club.

Whilst we are all too aware that divisions do sadly exist within the club, we would call on everyone to forget the past and work together for the common goal – which is FC Halifax Town. 'Our' football club is not big enough for any of its supporters to be ignored and anyone who thinks otherwise is wrong.

## Progressive Matters – an update on youth development

*As posted on the [www.htst.org](http://www.htst.org) website 19/5/09*

In September 2008, Halifax Town Supporters' Trust announced its sponsorship of the Halifax Town Youth and Community Development Trust – better known as the Youth Team and Centre of Excellence.

We thought it would be useful to provide an update and refresher to members about what this organisation does and what its aims are for the future.

The U-19s officially represents FC Halifax Town as its Youth Team but operates from Calderdale College through a set-up arranged by Geoff Ralph back in 2006. The players are not apprentices but are at the college under the coaching of Des Hazel. Des, a former Sheffield Wednesday and St Kitts footballer, has the attitude that if it's not good enough for Manchester United, then it's not good enough for Halifax Town.

The Youth Team is mostly funded by the college though officially affiliated to the club so that it can represent Halifax Town in the FA Youth Cup. There are approximately 60 players coached by Des at the college and the best 16 or so make up the FCHT Youth Team and play in the Northern Division of the Football Conference Youth League. The rest of the players compete in other leagues including the ECFA (English College League) but representing Calderdale College.

The players do a 2-year B-Tech in Sports Science which includes 12 hours coaching with Des per week. This ensures the players have accredited qualifications should they fail to make it as a professional footballer.

The Football Conference Youth League has five divisional leagues meaning there are approximately 60 teams in the structure. The majority of teams represent clubs operating in higher divisions than the Shaymen and last season the Northern Division consisted of 8 teams other than Halifax; Burton Albion (Conference National), Southport (Conference North), Stalybridge Celtic (Conference North), FC United of Manchester (Unibond Premier), Farsley Celtic (Conference North), Garforth Town (Unibond One North) and MMU / Newcastle (feeder club to Crewe Alexandra).

The 2008 / 09 season has recently finished and Halifax Town finished 3rd behind Burton Albion and Southport, which is the highest finish ever in the Conference. Whilst they got off to a bad start due to the uncertainty surrounding the club, they took 22 points from the last nine matches. They also played in the FA Youth Cup losing 4-3 at Silsden in the first round with a team that included 6 players from the U-16s Centre of Excellence team.

The Youth Team is assimilated from two main sources:

1. Advertising by the college
2. Promotion from the Halifax Town Centre of Excellence

Last season the Youth Team contained 5 players who had graduated from the Centre of Excellence. Next season the squad will more than likely contain 10 products of the Centre, many of which are born and bred in the Halifax area. It is expected that this will be the strongest Youth Team since it started three years ago as the CoE continues to grow in both terms of the quantity and quality of its players. It is expected that the Youth Team will benefit from a greater input of high quality graduates and this process has already started.

The Centre of Excellence is tied into the Youth Team and all age groups play as Halifax Town, in Halifax Town colours. Without it the strength of the Youth Team would be weakened as there would be no structure in place at the younger end to instil into the players a disciplined and professional work ethic.

Des Hazel, as well as Youth Team Coach, is also head of the Centre of Excellence whilst Nick Fletcher – a co-optee of HTST – is Head of Coordination and Assistant Coach of the Youth Team. There are therefore strong links between the two structures which can only be good for the future development of the best young and local talent.

The CoE is completely self funding mainly through parental contributions; yet it still has to meet the strict criteria laid down by the Football League of which clubs under that umbrella receive a grant of £160k per annum. A licence is also required if the Centre wants to play against teams in the Foot-

ball League which means the organisation is professional by its nature throughout.

It has to hit performance indicators in a number of areas to receive its licence e.g. quality of coaches, self-contained playing facilities, staffing levels, etc. The Centre is therefore expensive to run to ensure it maintains the level of development and professionalism for which it strives. Every penny they receive from sources other than the parents is vital and our sponsorship has helped fund the scholarships of a number of talented youngsters to help ensure the best young talent in the area, stays in the area.

The Centre currently has 150 players which should reach circa 200 by September of 2009. Every league manager in Halifax, at ages U16s and under, have been contacted in the last 12-months and invited to send their best players for trial. By September every school in West Yorkshire will also have been contacted and invited to send players for trial. The players all train and play in Halifax Town labelled clothing and are proud to do so.

The majority of players have been at other professional clubs whilst approximately 30-40% are from the Halifax area.

Sides are run from U9s through to U16s and then onto the Youth Team and for all intents and purposes it is operated as though Halifax Town is a Football League club. Over the last 18-months sides representing the CoE and Youth Team have beaten sides representing 22 professional clubs at different ages including Liverpool, Burnley and Bradford City.

Des works full-time at the college and part-time with the CoE. There are 16 other coaches, 2 goalkeeping coaches, a Centre Welfare officer, a Physio, Trials Coach and an Admin Officer. Next season they hope to employ a conditioning coach with players training three times a week whilst playing games on a Sunday.

The Halifax Town Youth and Community Development Trust is rapidly and increasingly becoming recognised for producing a professional, yet cost effective youth development programme, designed to produce players for the future. Halifax Town Supporters' Trust is proud to be a major sponsor of this organisation and we hope our support will see FC Halifax Town reap the benefits in the long-term.

## **HTST Pub Pals and Business Friends**

A and G Autos (01422) 202191

Belgrave Social Club (01422) 354726

Colin's Tyre Services (01422) 381179

Furniture City (01422) 344541

Halifax Snooker Club & Electrical Bowl (01422) 360913

Holmeward Car Sales and Service Bay (01422) 345267

Pembertons Barn-Farm shop (01274) 832870

The Railway Hotel (01422) 351209

The Southdale Lounge (01422) 434239

The Star Inn (01422) 373164

Ziggy's Spice House (01422) 381381