



## Winnersh Rangers – A Brief History

Some of you could be forgiven for thinking that Winnersh Rangers FC has been around for a long time – it certainly feels that way. But you might be surprised to learn that it was, in fact, only established six years ago. Here's how I remember it:

My son Sam (then 7 years old) : “Dad, when can I play for a football team?”

Me: “I’m sorting it out, son. Just a bit difficult at the moment. There doesn’t seem to be a local team – I’m trying to find you one that’s near to home and school.”

Sam: “But how long do I have to wait Dad? You’ve been promising for ages!”

Me: “I know, I know ... I’ll get on to it this weekend.”

Sam: “You’ll take ages! Anyway, I want to play with my friends from school.”

Me: “Well, where do they play? Which team do they belong to?”

Sam: “They don’t play for anyone either.”

Me: “Well don’t worry about it – I’ll make you a football team – how about that?”

And that’s literally how it all started!

### Registering the team

What a performance! I had only a minimal idea of how to go about it but managed to get “the team” in the Woodley Hammers summer tournament which was only in a few weeks time. I was told I needed to be registered and pay the appropriate fees. Thankfully, I was given the name of Keith Wicks, who founded the East Berks Junior 7 A Side Association. Keith has an inspirational attitude to the game and with his help and encouragement, the rest was relatively easy.

### The name

The name seemed obvious. There was no other team in the Winnersh area so Winnersh Rangers FC was formed.

### The famous purple/white kit

As for the now famous purple and white kit, well that was just sheer fluke. I contacted a football supplier and asked them if they had six shirts going cheap. We negotiated for a while but it was soon obvious that their definition of ‘cheap’ wasn’t mine! After much discussion I was eventually told that they had some old stock of purple shirts and would I like those? I can’t tell you what my wife said but as I was skint at the time they sounded perfect to me! They arrived, we put the sunglasses on and the rest, as they famously say, is history!

### The team

What a team! I can see them all now... and yes, I do still have a video of that tournament and those players. But I digress. At that point I only had one player so a recruitment drive at Bearwood Primary School was needed. Thankfully Sam's friends were keen to join us and so we added a number of players, including Thomas Howes, who was the 2003 Manager's Player of the Year for the U12 Tycoons. I had a chat to my old friend Dave Simmill to see if his lad Michael would join in and before we knew it, Dave and I were sat down discussing tactics. Things don't change much do they?

For the record, we did rather well in that tournament, reaching the finals of the plate cup and walking off with medals and glory! What a day it was! And who'd have thought where it would all lead?

### Cottage Industry?

Well, we were certainly industrious. Dave, Gillian and I formed a management committee together with our friend Janette Hughes. She "volunteered" to become the club chairman and for a lady who had no interest or experience in football whatsoever, took a unique interest in all that went on. Players were drafted in from all over the area; teams and managers were set up as needed. Mrs Derrick the Headteacher at Bearwood Primary School was particularly supportive of our cause and allowed us to play on the school pitch for a relatively small fee. We'd cracked it. Winnersh Rangers FC was up and running!

The club management and its team of volunteer committee members together helped WR grow. We expanded on to Bearwood Recreation Ground, held our first Presentation Day and won our first tournament trophy. The club had truly taken off and was getting bigger every year.

### The Committee

During 2002 an official committee was elected and responsibilities divided up. A club constitution was drafted and adopted. Key positions were introduced with more being allocated this year. The club has gone from strength to strength and we now have 11 committee members all working tirelessly towards the good of the club. We have come a long way in the last two years. We are now proud to have the following positions:

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|--|----------------|
| • Chairman                                   | Martin Belton  |
| • Vice Chairman                              | Dave Simmill   |
| • Secretary                                  | Ian Davey      |
| • Treasurer                                  | Roger Evans    |
| • Kit & Equipment Secretary                  | Dave Simmill   |
| • Pitches & Fixtures Secretary               | Gillian Belton |
| • Training & Referees Co-ordinator           | Neil Chalfont  |
| • Health & Safety + Child Protection Officer | Graeme Parker  |
| • Subscriptions Secretary                    | Sam Dean       |
| • Girls Football Development Officer         | Chris Jones    |
| • Publicity Officer                          | Andy Cooley    |
| • Events Co-ordinator                        | Claire Dyer    |

Adrian Betteridge will be our new webmaster from 2005/06. This season we aim to be able to feed him the information he needs to get the website up to date and running well.

Annette Poulson and Bernadette Render are responsible for the running of the Purple Café. Liz Cooley runs our Boot Room where we sell on donated used boots for a small fee.

I cannot emphasise enough how much commitment and hard work these people put into the club. Together with our team of tireless managers and support staff, the hours dedicated to the running of Winnersh Rangers is phenomenal and I would again like to thank all those involved with the running of this club.

### Recent History

Most of the rest you probably know. If you read any of our recent newsletters you cannot have failed to have noticed how much the club has grown over the last few years and how successful it has been.

For the coming season we now have the following girls teams - an U18s girls' teams, two Under 12s teams, two U11s team, an U9s team and an U8s team under development! The boys teams run from U7 through to U15s and we also run our own Soccer School for the U6s.

The development of the girls' teams was a huge undertaking and my special thanks go to Chris and Penny Jones for their dedication and sheer hard work in setting this up. The girls' section is becoming ever more popular and will be an integral part of the club's future.

We are delighted to now have our own "home" in the form of The Allnatt Pavilion at Bearwood Recreation Ground for use at weekends (plus two evenings per week if required). Here we host our famous "Purple Café" where we serve bacons butties and hot drinks to frozen spectators and players alike. The club's social life has also taken off with Race Nights, Quiz n' Curry Nights as well as our regular Raffle Draw at Christmas time. Be sure to watch out for "dates for your diary" items in our newsletters.

We are also delighted to continue our association with David Taylor Estate Agents the club's major sponsor and my special thanks go to David and his colleagues for their substantial contribution to the club.

### Next Steps

Winnersh Rangers FC is not a club for sitting on its laurels. Yes, we have come a long way and yes, we have achieved a huge amount in our short history. Nonetheless, it is still very much the ambition of the current committee that the club be seen to be one of the BIG PLAYERS in the area. To do that we are striving for Charter Mark status which would not only bring us enormous recognition and credos within the footballing community, but would also provide us with financial gain through access to grants.

SO, WATCH OUT FOR MORE NEWS AS IT BREAKS!  
HAVE A GOOD SEASON AND REMEMBER – IT'S ONLY A GAME!

Martin Belton  
Co-Founder & Club Chairman