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Centenary Year 1903-2003

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Match Day
Programme



ABERDEEN V CELTIC

Scottish Premier League

Thursday 2nd January 2003, Kick Off 3.00pm

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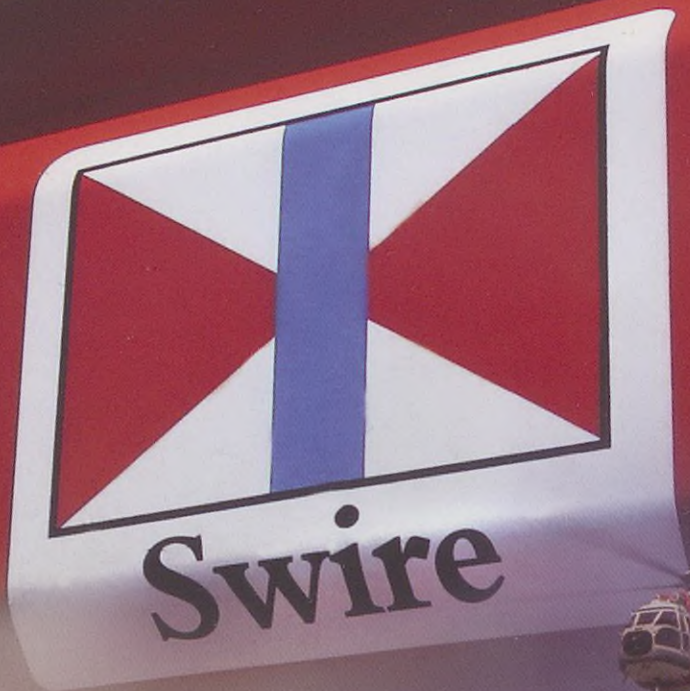
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FROM THE **DUGOUT**

First of all, I really hope that everyone enjoyed a fantastic festive period and that you have all recovered from the excesses of Hogmanay. With the Club's Centenary now having officially started, it promises to be quite a year and obviously it be even better if we can manage to bring some success on the park.

We could not, of course, have wished for a tougher game to launch our Centenary with this afternoon's visit of the SPL champions. Celtic have already beaten us twice in the league this season already and so far, we have yet to score. Although I haven't faced them yet as manager here at Pittodrie, I was in charge at

Caley when we lost 4-2 in Glasgow in the CIS Cup. They are a top quality side and it will be extremely difficult but we will most certainly be giving it a go.

After today's match has finished there is of course the short break until the third round of the Tennent's Scottish Cup in a little over three weeks time, as well as the transfer window that affords us the opportunity to potentially freshen up the squad.

Duncan Shearer and myself are also using the time available to get to know the playing staff a bit better with the short trip to Portugal the week after next. It will be an excellent chance to mix some relaxation with some hard work and with opposition of the calibre of Wolfsburg and Ajax, it will, I am certain, be very beneficial.

As I have said on several occasions already, the real time to judge Duncan and myself will be next season, by which time the squad we have assembled will be along the lines of what we want. We may very well tinker with things over the next fortnight or so but it will be the summer before the supporters see significant changes.

In the meantime, all of the players already here will have ample opportunity to convince Duncan and me that they really want to play for this Club and that they have the desire to succeed. Several of those in the squad have demonstrated that they do have these qualities and I hope that they will form the backbone for the future.

While I would urge you not to expect miracles, let me assure you that both of us are very ambitious and we believe that, with a lot of hard work and a lot of fun along the way, we can, in time, deliver what such a fantastic support has been crying out for, namely a successful side.

Enjoy the game!

STEVE PATERSON

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Programme Insert

Today's special Centenary issue contains a reprint of an Aberdeen match programme from 1963. This programme marked the Dons 60th year in existence. Despite an extensive search through the programmes of the time there was nothing done by the club to mark the 50th year. I hope that you find the reprint of interest—there certainly is some fascinating material in it. Enjoy your New Year and lets' make it one to remember.

Before they were Famous

It is well enough known that Aberdeen FC came in to existence as we know it in April 1903, but football had been thriving in the North East a long time before that. Aberdeen FC Historian Kevin Stirling traces the earliest football played in Aberdeen.....

Back in 1881, when the country was steeped in Victorian traditions, sporting activity in the town of Aberdeen was centred on Rugby and Cricket. Further south and in particular in the central area of Scotland, Association Football was thriving, having progressed from the formation of the Scottish Cup in 1873. Fourteen years later, football arrived in Aberdeen. The Albert Hall in Correction Wynd provided the humble setting when around 14 enthusiasts gathered on Saturday 8th October 1881. Woodside School provided three teachers who instigated the initial moves. A public meeting was called in an effort to gauge support for the proposed football club. Fellow teachers joined the small gathering, which was also attended by two bookbinders, a medical student and a tailor. Although the apparent apathy was a disappointment, a committee was formed. The new secretary was then instructed to purchase a set of maroon jerseys, two balls and an inflater. At the close of the meeting it was also announced that the new club would press ahead with applying to the SFA for membership. With no local opponents in the Aberdeen area, they had to cast their net further afield, with Tayside the most likely destination, an area where there was several clubs. The Aberdeen club eventually secured use of the ground at the Grammar School, an ideal site given its' central location. The first match that Aberdeen FC played was on 11th March 1882, when they journeyed to Coupar Angus. Aberdeen lost 4-0 and the team that played was:

A.Millar, AV.Lothian (Captain), R.Hyslop, JA.McHardy, J.Burns, JC.Ross, A.Steele, W.Thompson, W.Stewart, DB.Lothian, CE.Glennie.

Aberdeen's first venture in the Scottish Cup came in 1882, a first round tie against Dundee Harp. On 7th October 1882, a crowd of 400 gathered at the trim Grammar School, to see the visitors run out 3-1 winners. Despite their baptism in the Scottish Cup, locally there were still problems. No other team had

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| ORION OBSERVER. | |
| Orion F.C. Official Programme | |
| FOOTBALL NOTES | |
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| GOALS | Total |
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emerged, although there was reports that Aberdeen University was in the process of forming a team. By the end of 1884 Aberdeen took on a new look as the maroon jerseys were discarded for an all white strip. It was not until that year that new clubs finally emerged, with Peterhead, Nairn, Aberdeen Rovers and the infamous Bon Accord all keen to join the growing local interest in the game. At this point, football in

Aberdeen was on the threshold of a boom, and it seemed inevitable that the exhaustive efforts of the Aberdeen club was to bear fruit. In those days the Links to the north of Pittodrie was the sight of many a stirring encounter. With the apparent haste as to any new clubs coming to the fore, there were concerns from within the Aberdeen club that with so many new teams that the quality might not be of a high enough standard. Aberdeen were convinced that any new club should be well enough equipped to compete favourably, and that they would still have to venture south to further their own ambitions.

Nevertheless, the emergence of new clubs had to be encouraged. Aberdeen concerns were soon to be brutally realised in September 1885. It remains a mystery why Aberdeen Football Club did not enter the Scottish Cup in 1885. The "Whites" had applied to enter the Cup in each of the three previous years, and although all they could muster was a solitary victory at Kirriemuir, Aberdeen were certainly not disgraced in their other outings. That 'distinction' was to fall on Bon Accord and Aberdeen Rovers. They probably wish they had not bothered, as both clubs were humiliated on the same, fateful day. The fact that the Aberdeen teams was only playing in their third outing and first away from home only endorsed the naivety of their decision to enter the Cup. It may have been viewed at the time as a great adventure, but a permanent and unwanted place in history awaited the unsuspecting Aberdeen sides. It was well known that even

Aberdeen FC had encountered difficulties in attempting to get all of their players to travel, and both Bon Accord and Rovers were sadly under strength for the task ahead. Dundee Harp defeated Aberdeen Rovers 35-0 at East Dock Street Park, while up the road at Gayfield, Arbroath created a world record score by going one better against the hapless Bon Accord, racking up an incredible 36 goals without reply. After this shameful episode it did nothing to



enhance the game in these parts. The Aberdeen club had been quietly going about their business for the last four years, building on their modest beginnings, and the town's football reputation was in ruins. It seemed that a lot of hard work put in by the Aberdeen club had counted for little as the novices of Bon Accord and Aberdeen Rovers went against the general feeling that they were just not ready for any serious competition. It seemed that the cup debacles had provided a watershed in the area as in 1885 it was certainly boom time as clubs emerged at an alarming rate. Bon Accord for all of their sins did not last much longer. Indeed, in their very last game, in February 1886, they were losing 3-0 to Aberdeen and after disputing an Aberdeen goal, the Bon Accord players walked off, never to be seen

again. In order to overcome the growing number of games that were now being played throughout the town, it was a fitting reward for the endeavours of Aberdeen FC that an Association of clubs be formed. With several now boasting healthy memberships, it was clear that the collective strength of all clubs should be brought together. There was also a general feeling that a competitive edge was required if the game was to flourish. At a meeting in the Café

Buildings on Monday 18th April 1887, the various club administrators called the meeting to discuss the formation of an association of clubs. It was at that meeting that the Aberdeenshire Football association was formed. Orion had also secured the use of the ground at Central Park, situated in the Kittybrewster area. Extensive work was carried out and on completion, was thought to be the best in Aberdeen at that time. Although the Scottish Cup would provide little success for Aberdeen clubs, there was much excitement as the inaugural Aberdeenshire Cup competition got under way. Aberdeen had also been active away from the playing side as they moved to a new ground in Old Aberdeen. The Chanonry was adapted and went on to become the home of Aberdeen FC until they moved to Pittodrie in 1899.

The first Aberdeenshire Cup Final was won by Aberdeen who had gone through the entire 1887-88 season undefeated.

After eliminating great rivals Orion the "Whites" defeated Aberdeen Rangers 7-1 at the new Chanonry ground on 24th March 1888. By 1889, more than 40 teams were playing in the North east.

The final part of the Aberdeen jigsaw fell in to place that year when Victoria United was formed. Victoria

was of course part of the amalgamation in 1903, and was named after the Victoria Bridge, situated in the South of Aberdeen. They played their first games at the recreation grounds near to the River Dee and looked to draw support from the growing community in the south. It was no real surprise that the three clubs who formed the present Aberdeen FC were strategically placed in the town.

Aberdeen continued to play out of the established old part of the town at the Chanonry and latterly at Pittodrie. Orion was well served to the north at Cattofield while Victoria Utd drew support from the south. It was from this strong core of support that the three clubs were eventually to amalgamate and form the present Aberdeen FC.

The Aberdeenshire Cup remained the focal point of local competition and these ties were invariably keenly contested and well attended. Progress was made in 1891 when the Northern League came into force. Up until that point, fixtures outwith the various cup competitions were arranged by the Aberdeenshire FA, and were not in any recognised League set up. As the 19th Century was coming to a close, Aberdeen had outgrown the Chanonry and were actively involved in searching for a new ground which could meet the increasing demands that had to be



addressed as football was gaining in popularity. In February 1899 the club took up an option to take over the tenancy of the ground at the Gallows Marsh, north of the Broad Hill. Dumbarton visited Pittodrie for the opening game on 2nd September 1899.

Aberdeen celebrated in style, winning 7-1. Although Pittodrie was certainly recognised as the best facility in the area the players had to get changed in a nearby house such were the spartan surroundings. Hot water was a luxury but far removed from their Chanonry days when an after match shower was normally a dip in an ice-cold bucket. However, Pittodrie's stature gained further credence when

Scotland played Wales at the Aberdeen ground in the first full international to be played in Aberdeen. On 3rd February 1900, Scotland defeated the Welsh 5-2 before a record 11,000 attendance. It soon became evident that amalgamation in some form might be the way forward. If the clubs needed any further evidence then in November 1902, Aberdeen resisted a proposal from Hibernian to relocate from their Easter Road ground in Edinburgh and move in on Pittodrie. On Wednesday 2nd December 1902, the working representatives of

Aberdeen, Victoria and Orion held a meeting in the County Hotel. The New Year of 1903 brought fresh hope that the new proposed club would be accepted in to the First Division but on 5th January the committee was disappointed to learn that their application for membership had been rejected. It was clear however, that the door had not been entirely closed on the matter. Aberdeen had to go and put their plans to existing clubs and lobby support accordingly. There was already a strong support for Aberdeen in the Tayside area, although it was not clear if some of the clubs in the west had similar thoughts. However, it soon became apparent that Aberdeen had gained

enough support to make another bid in June 1903 with every likelihood of success. A public meeting on 20th March 1903 was attended by more than 1,600 and it was from that meeting that the amalgamation was almost agreed.

The Committee convened at a meeting on 14th April 1903 at the offices of Alex Clarke, solicitors in Bridge Street. George Alexander of Orion presided with Mr Clarke acting on behalf of the three clubs in settling their affairs. The agreement was approved and Aberdeen Football Club came into being.

Agreement with the Crescent Cricket Club over the lease of Pittodrie was also accepted. A new board of directors was appointed to act in the interests of the new club. A concerted effort was now required to gain admission to the Scottish League as past applications did not have the required support, and with the new club now a reality, optimism was high. In the meantime, Aberdeen FC had to be content with continuing to play in the Northern and East of Scotland Leagues. Admission to the First Division was again turned down in May 1903 when a Celtic proposal to increase the First Division from 12 to 14 clubs was refused. With no relegation at that time, it was virtually at the discretion of the member clubs that sides that finished bottom of the table retained their status. Both Morton and Port Glasgow were successful in this regard, and Aberdeen were then to lose out to Motherwell and Airdrie who were now to join the top flight. Whether the Aberdeen club were fully committed to joining the First Division or not, no application to join the Second had been made so they were now forced to play their first season as the new club in the now unpopular Northern League.

Kevin Stirling

Event & Merchandise Update

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A Burns Night with a difference.....

afc100 has teamed up with the Aberdeen FC Supporter's Trust to deliver a fantastic Centenary Burns Night, sponsored by SAIC, to be held on Saturday 18 January in the Beach Ballroom, Aberdeen.

As well as toasting Scotland's Bard Rabbie Burns, we will be celebrating the Club's Centenary Year in style but adding some unique footballing flavour to the evening!

We have some fantastic speakers, Aberdeen's very own Buff Hardie and the renowned David Sibbald with some more surprises along the way. A great night for all, with something for absolutely everyone, including dancing to the fantastic ceilidh band Shindig.



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In the Reds Corner....

Due to an increase in interest and some requests from the Red Army we have launched a new feature, which we hope will become regular. 'In the Reds Corner' is a classified section for collectors and enthusiasts alike. You are invited to advertise for that elusive programme, ticket or any memorabilia that you require. Please note that this service is FREE for anyone looking to exchange or buy items. You can include up to 100 words free, and anything over that will cost 10p per word. If you are selling any items directly then the cost for an advert is 25p per word with your name and contact details free. For further details contact; The Programme Editor, Aberdeen FC, Pittodrie Stadium, Aberdeen, AB24 5QH. You can also e-mail your requests to; abstat.afc@virgin.net Please make any payment out to Aberdeen Football Club.

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