

MARKINCH BOYS MEMORIAL STONE
DEDICATION CEREMONY

...

SUNDAY 29 AUGUST 2010

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The ceremony will be conducted by Rev Alex Forsyth,
minister at Markinch Parish Church.

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Markinch Primary School class: 1967



Our photograph shows three of the lads, all in the middle row. From left to right – Ian Paton, John Gray, Ronald Paton, Billy Murdoch, Douglas Morrison, Mason Philip

Markinch Primary School class: 1966



The photograph shows two of the lads, both in the middle row. Peter is on the left and Ronald is second from the right. Bryan would have been in this photo but was absent from school on the day it was taken.

Welcome ...

We wish to welcome you to the memorial garden today to pay tribute to the five Markinch boys who lost their lives so tragically on 2 January 1971 at Ibrox Stadium, Glasgow. Family members of the boys are here along with friends, schoolmates and members of the local community - all suffered loss that day. Willie Johnston, who was on the books of Rangers at the time and attended all five funerals, is here representing the Football Club.

None of our committee members actually knew the boys, their families or friends but we felt a sense of loss as members of the 'Rangers Family'. People have asked us why we undertook this project and we offer an explanation on the sequence of events leading to us standing beside this magnificent memorial stone today.

We noticed the original stone was a little weather-beaten and decided to clean it and have the inscription re-lettered. A photograph was placed on a Rangers website along with a heartfelt passage written by Shane Fenton, a friend of the boys. We wanted to enhance the existing stone by purchasing a new base with the original memorial being placed on top. The base includes the boys' names and an inscription reading 'Forever In Our Thoughts'.

The committee received contributions from all corners of the globe. It was not only the local community but worldwide Rangers Supporters Clubs and organisations who rallied round to contribute to the project. To each and every

one of you who assisted we offer a massive thank you as without your help today would not have been possible.

We collected approximately £5,500 and decided to honour the boys in ways over and above this memorial stone. We purchased a bench which is now situated in Markinch churchyard. A dedication ceremony for this was carried out by Rev Alex Forsyth on 6 June. The committee donated ten cups - five for football and five for netball (each bearing one the lad's names) - two shields and a memorial plaque to Auchmuty High School. An award ceremony was carried out on 12 June when the trophies were presented by Sandy Jardine of Rangers Football Club. We will be presenting a further memorial plaque and shield to Markinch Primary School and donating a trophy to Shane Fenton for a competition at Markinch Highland Games.

The committee was gifted five rowan trees from Erskine House and we wish to thank them very much for this wonderful donation. The trees were grown in their own nursery.

Today's unveiling of the new memorial will be carried out by Ian Paton, the twin brother of Ronald and Shane Fenton, a school friend of the boys.

We finish by thanking everyone who has helped to contribute towards honouring the five boys and particularly Rev Alex Forsyth for the heartfelt and dignified dedication services for the bench and memorial stone.

To The Markinch Boys – Forever In Our Thoughts
The Markinch Memorial Fund Committee

Schooldays Remembered ...

Growing up in Markinch through the 1960s was at a more sedate pace than people seem to live their lives today. The premises in which we started our schooling in 1961-2 are no longer standing and the site at Bowling Green Street is now a small housing estate. Shortly after starting there we moved to the building which is the current primary school, rebuilt in the early 1950s following a fire in the previous school. None of us were particularly brilliant pupils - on the other hand, nor were we dimwits. The prize-giving ceremony of 1968 saw three of the lads receiving prizes – Bryan for writing; Peter for creative writing and Ronald won the Captain's prize as best sportsman.

John Dixon Park was the place to meet for a game of football. Back then most boys had a ball but mine was a brown leather, lace-up with internal bladder and when it was inflated by my dad – a task beyond me as I couldn't stop the air coming out – it was used for our matches. We didn't use the main football pitch as both goalmouths usually had a triangle of bare earth in the goalmouths, out past the penalty spot which made the goal-keeper's task of diving for a ball painful when the ground was hard. We played beside the pitch on the grass nearest Park View. Jackets were thrown down to make the goals and we played until one team scored six goals, then changed ends at half time, continuing until the winning team had scored twelve goals. Usually the teams were mixed but occasionally we played a Markinch north end versus south end – our equivalent of an international fixture.

The lads played football, either informally in the park, for the school, for the cub scouts or latterly in a more organised team. The school team at Markinch Primary was pretty successful. In those days we were set up with a goal-keeper; two full-backs; three half-backs and five forwards – no substitutes! Ian Paton and I were the full-backs, Ronald centre-half and Douglas was a forward and the team's captain. In our final year at primary – 1968 - the team finished as runners-up to Carleton Primary School in the Glenrothes and district schools league and we were beaten by the same team in the Rotary cup final. The cub scout pack also ran a football team - I played up front with Mason - but it was less successful. We didn't win a game during that season but for us it was the taking part which mattered!

When not chasing a football around we were happy to be spectators at games being played in the park. These were amateur teams and for us it was cheap entertainment. In the late 1960s, Markinch had two major employers – Tullis Russell, papermakers and John Haig, distillers. Both had useful football teams who played in the Scottish Industrial Sports Association's football section summer league. My father was on the committee which managed the Tullis Russell team. It was good enough to get through to cup finals, usually played at the grounds of the Fife professional teams and some of the lads came along to watch.

The Paton twins, Ken and I and a couple of other lads attended the Sunday school at St Drostan's church – this was before the merger of St Drostan's and St Mark's in 1969. We were lucky enough to have a teacher by the name of John Barclay who took us to Stark's Park one day because of our great interest in football. John was a few years older than us

but he was still attending high school at the time. He worked part-time as the Co-op message boy, delivering people's groceries on a bike with a basket on the front of the handle bars. He paid the bus fares to Kirkcaldy and entry to the game from his own pocket – a not inconsiderable sum.

I recall Ronald was the first person within our group of friends to be interested in golf. I'm not sure how that came about but perhaps it was through television where Tony Jacklin was beginning to make a name for himself. At that stage, Markinch did not have a golf course and I don't recall how he acquired clubs or where he played or practiced.

When not chasing a football, some of us had a hobby of playing table soccer. The game was named Subbuteo and we had a couple of leagues in Markinch and another one when we moved to Auchmuty School. None of our parents had tables big enough to hold the playing mat so we tended to crawl around the floor - that was the nearest we came to sitting around doing little in these pre-computer days.

We are grateful to the members of the Rangers Supporters Memorial Committee for the work they have done in arranging to have the memorial garden layout improved and for reminding the townsfolk of Markinch – both old and new – of the memory of the lads who died on that fateful day. Our thanks go to the committee's members.

Ken Wilkie and Ian Gourlay

Memories of a Tragic Day ...

Shane Fenton recalled his personal memories of the tragedy in which five of his friends were killed in an article published in the *Glenrothes Gazette* on 4 January 2006. It is reproduced with permission from that newspaper's editor and from Shane.

'The morning of January 2, 1971, was like any other match day morning for us young Old Firm fans from the south end of Markinch, with the usual 'mickey-taking', banter and side-bets. Pete Lee, Joe Mitchell and myself, all Celtic fans, walked from Markinch along with Dougie Morrison, Peter Easton, Ron Paton, Mason Philp and Bryan Todd, all Rangers followers. We were headed for the CISWO Club in Glenrothes where we would board the rival supporters' buses. Despite supporting different teams we were all the best of mates and most of us played for the then Markinch United football team. Little did we know as we boarded our buses that it would be the last time we would see our pals.

'The match itself was nothing out of the ordinary and looked to be heading for a no-scoring draw when Celtic scored in the last minute. We at the Celtic end decided to leave at this stage and were actually back on our bus for some 15 minutes before some of the older supporters arrived and told us that Rangers had equalised. At that time we knew nothing of the tragic events that were happening on stairway 13. In fact, it wasn't until the bus made a stop in Kincardine on the way home that we heard something had happened at the Rangers end of Ibrox. The older fans who had been at the

pub for a refreshment had heard the news on the television. We never thought for a minute that Markinch boys had been involved.

‘When I returned many locals had already started to panic. My relatives, like those of the other boys who knew we were at the match, had already started inquiring to make sure we were all okay. When the news eventually came through that Ron, Dougie, Bryan, Peter and Mason hadn't returned with the Rangers' bus all kinds of thoughts went through our heads. We hoped that they had just missed the bus and would arrive home later. We stayed out until late in the evening hoping they would appear on the last buses and trains into Markinch. It was over the next couple of days when the devastating news that we feared had become a reality. The entire village was in complete shock with the news that our five friends had been victims of the terrible disaster.

‘The next few days Markinch, particularly Park View, the street where four of the boys lived was awash with reporters, photographers and television news crews. When it was time for the funerals, almost the entire town of Markinch, then a population of 2,344, turned out to mourn the five local schoolboys. Three of the boys were buried side by side at Markinch Cemetery. The services of the other two were held at Kirkcaldy Crematorium. I can remember the cortege stretching back along the streets lined with mourners. Rangers' chairman, John Lawrence, attended the service at Markinch along with half a dozen players.

‘The boys may be gone, but 35 years on, they are still remembered by the people of Markinch. Their names come

up periodically when we recall schoolboy tales in our pub conversations. And there is a permanent reminder with the memorial plaque which is situated at the end of Park View.'

Shane Fenton

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Photograph by Ken Wilkie

The dedication of the memorial bench in Markinch churchyard on 6 June. Family and friends of the boys are shown with Rev Alex Forsyth.

Ronald Paton's twin brother Ian is fourth from the left; his father John is fifth from the right of those standing. Dirk Easton is directly behind his mother, Mrs Gisela Easton who is sitting on the bench beside Mrs Margaret Paton.

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The photograph of Bryan was provided by the Todd family.
He is wearing an Auchmuty Junior High School uniform
which would date it to around 1969-70.

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Observations on the dedication services for the bench
and memorial stone can be found in the book *Markinch: Its
Church and Parish* by Ian Gourlay and Ken Wilkie to be
published on 1 October 2010.

(book@markinchchurch.org.uk or Amazon.co.uk) The sale
proceeds will be donated to Markinch Parish Church to assist
in preserving its historic buildings. Most of the boys attended
the church Youth Club.

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Printed by Inkcharm Publications for Rangers Supporters Memorial
Committee

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Peter Easton
Douglas Morrison
Ronald Paton
Mason Philip
Bryan Todd

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Absent Friends

The time has come to say goodnight,
for every road must end.
To the ones who care and their always there,
our very special friends.
Let's say goodnight to those we love,
and maybe shed a tear.
But before we close lets think of those,
we love who can't be here.
Let's raise a glass to absent friends,
for every road must end.
You'll always be there in our hearts,
our special absent friends.

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