

## DONATION PLAN

**Getting shirty** Brian Cooper and Sundeep Salins  
100118FootballTops\_03



# OPERATION FOOTBALL

## Brian's mission keeps Indian eye surgeons working

Rachel Clark

**A football-daft Perth man is kitting out staff at an Indian hospital by delving into his quirky collection of replica strips.**

Brian Cooper has been gathering the collection of football shirts from the back of his wardrobe and friends to be sent to the Velemegna Hospital in the southern Indian city of Bidar, near Hyderabad.

Brian explained: "For a few years now I have been sending football shirts out to this hospital.

"I met brothers Sundeep and Thumma through the Church of the Nazarene and the shirts will go out to their mother and father's hospital in India.

"Once I got to know Sundeep really well I found out they were collecting football shirts and they asked if I had any to donate and I said 'yes, I have quite a few shirts.'

"I love football so I have a lot of old shirts. I am a huge Parma FC fan and I go over to Italy a lot and always buy shirts so that's why I have so many. I have a lot of St Johnstone shirts too."

Brain, who has been heavily involved in the football scene in the Fair City for a number of years, says the staff at Velemegna Hospital, which specialises in treating eye conditions and leprosy, will use the shirts when they are performing operations.

He said the material is perfect for staff who are running a hospital in extreme heat.

Brian continued: "The shirts are used by the staff who do eye operations in the hospital.

"I probably don't realise just how important it all is.

"It is mind-blowing to think that all these shirts are being used in eye operations over in India because of this donation.

"I did a donation last year as well

but I didn't realise then just how the shirts were going to be used until they had been sent over to Bidar.

"It is good to see it all coming together again this year."

This is not the first cause to have benefited from Brian's love of the beautiful game.

Previously he has donated football kits and football boots to Perth philanthropist Ann Gloag's children's home in Nairobi, Kenya.

He explained: "I have played football all my days in Perth so I know a lot of people through that.

"I was able to pick up loads of shirts. My shed was packed full.

"I was asked to donate a lot of football boots because they are like gold dust at the children's home so I picked up all the football boots I could find from charity shops around Perth to go over to Kenya.

"I have a photo album of every strip that has been donated and who it is from as well as a keepsake.

I have some photos as well of some of the boys in the home playing in St Johnstone kits."

A delegation from Perth is leaving on Wednesday, January 17, to make the long journey to Bidar.

One of those taking on the 10-day adventure is Erin Carr from Blend Coffee Lounge on the city's Old High Street.

She joined the group after Sundeep, who is co-owner of the popular coffee shop, suggested she go along.

Erin stold the PA: "I am definitely looking forward to it and I am pleased to be getting involved in the project as well.

"It is all very last-minute though. I only booked it about three weeks ago.

"When we are out there we will visit the hospital to hand over the shirts and a guy is coming along with us to make a film of it as part of the hospital's jubilee celebrations."



**History** A battle re-enactment  
Picture: James Rattray

## Fears A9 revamp will 'destroy' site

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between the tie-in to the existing dual carriageway at the northern end of the Pass of Killiecrankie and the Allt Chluain Underpass, close to the village of Aldclune.

Backfill from the road-widening would be tipped over the infamous spot near the Killiecrankie Hotel to raise the height of the new carriageway.

As well as the route proposed for the widened road, plans to create a layby have stirred hostility locally.

And an ancient farm building, said to be once used as a sniper point to pick off Government soldiers, does not appear on the plans, so is not being considered for conservation.

The Killiecrankie battle site is listed in the Inventory of Historic Battlefields, maintained by Historic Environment Scotland and the anniversary of the first Jacobite insurgency is marked by a popular event in the area.

An indication of the power of the past as a draw for tourism is that Killiecrankie Visitor Centre managed by the National Trust for Scotland was recently found to be one of the top visitor centres in the country.

A presentation was made on Monday by professional filmmaker William Rattray about the archaeology of the battlefield. Two thousand men died in one bloody hour on July 27 in 1689, it was bloodier than at the more famous Battle of Culloden.

After the presentation a vote was taken on Killiecrankie's response to the proposed A9 plan.

The community councillors and 20 or so members of the public all agreed if the current plan put forward by design engineers Jacobs was to go ahead, the topography of the battlefield would be altered and effectively destroyed as a visitor attraction and memorial site.

An independent campaign group, calling itself 'Killiecrankie1689' has been formed after a sub-committee of the

Killiecrankie Community Council did detailed research into implications of the road building.

The working group, separate to the community council, said it is not against the plans to widen the A9 to improve safety, but is concerned at the impact that the current plans will have on the Battle of Killiecrankie site.

"Killiecrankie1689 believes that the route which Transport Scotland favours for widening the crucial mile in Killiecrankie will cause unprecedented degradation of the battle site," explained a spokesperson for the new group.

The representative continued: "We hope we will enable people from further afield, not just Killiecrankie residents, to register their objections to the plans, there is very little time.

"Many of us here rely on tourism and were very alarmed when the compulsory purchase orders came in November about what could happen to this special site. We want archaeologists and actors from the Soldier of Killiecrankie event to have their say too."

The group also states: "Transport Scotland, its engineers and designers are obliged to explore every avenue to avoid negative impacts on the historic battlefield.

"The plan [of the route between Killiecrankie and Glen Garry] is now public and anyone who wishes to object to it must do so, in writing, to Transport Scotland before January 23.

The Scottish Government has described the dualling of the A9 as one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the country's history.

Set to be completed by 2025, the hope is to bring "faster journey times, better journey time reliability and road safety improvements for anyone travelling between the cities of Perth and Inverness."

For more information on 'Killiecrankie1689', see www.Killiecrankie1689.scot or search on social media.