

It certainly was the case that the only way was up for the Flyers as they entered the **1970/71 SEASON**. Les Lovell returned from over the Forth and Roy Reid was signed up in the net. There was an encouraging 8-1 shelling of the Dundee Rockets in the opening challenge match but once the Autumn Cup got underway it was the 7th of November before their first competitive win was recorded against the auld enemy Racers, 6-5 at Kirkcaldy. Despite this slow though it was considered that ice hockey, after a couple of seasons in the doldrums, was making a comeback both in Kirkcaldy and Scotland as a whole. The game was immensely popular a few seasons ago and it seemed that spectator interest was increasing again. Accordingly it was decided to revive the Fife Free Press Mirror of Merit – present holder from 1967/68 was Les Lovell. Joe Baird notched his 100th goal in the Northern League in the middle of November but the defeats kept coming, albeit it mostly single goal decisions.

Importantly however behind the scenes of the senior team Pep Young was working with the local youngsters to develop future Flyers. Some of the following names would be integral in the seasons ahead to lifting the Flyers to the top of the UK game: Tom Brown, Doug Latto, Stuart Winton, Brian Peat, Chic Cottrell, Willie Cottrell, Joe Ross, George Ramsay, Gordon Latto, Gordon Berturelli, Mike Boyle, Bill Mitchelston. Indeed in their 8-7 win at home against the Ayr Bruins on 2nd January the scoring summary read; Petrie 2, Baird 2, Lovell 2, Jack, Cottrell – proof of the Fife Flyers policy over the last two seasons of bringing along their young players had paid handsome dividends when they accounted for half of the total goals. Early signs that the team and hockey in general in Kirkcaldy was on the right tracks. The experienced players in the team were equally important and Lovell, McIntosh and Reid were selected for the GB's World Championship team to play in Holland. Whilst they had finished joint bottom of the Autumn Cup table with 5 points from 12 games they had produced a more competitive second half of the season in the league and along the way ended the eventual Champion Racers unbeaten league run with a 5-4 win in Edinburgh. They finished 4th on 9 points from 10 games but despite qualifying for the Spring Cup playoffs they did not compete and 5th place Ayr took their spot. The Icy Smith Cup produced the now customary exit at the first time of asking when they lost 10-6 in the North East to Whitley Bay Warriors. There was some silverware with the capture of the home based Skol Trophy after an 8-3 win against the Bruins. This trophy would appear to be glued inside the Flyers trophy cabinet for the best part of the decade.

Les Lovell was presented with the Mirror of Merit by Bernard Stocks, editor of the Ice Hockey Herald Annual (1968-69 to 1972-73 anyone remember that ?). Chic Cottrell was then voted NIHA best young prospect – Rookie of the Year. Les Lovell made the first All Star team and Joe McIntosh the second. For the **1971-72 SEASON** the Flyers had to rely further on youth as the experienced trio of McIntosh, Baird and Reid all moved on to the Ayr Bruins. Three of the Taylor brothers appeared as regulars, Jim in goal along with George and John. In the Autumn Cup they team had still slender hopes of success going into the middle of November but then were dumped 10-2 at home by Dundee Rockets which ended any hopes, ex Flyers Jimmy Spence was the assassin with a nap hand that night. Just to run salt in the following night he also scored 4 in a 7-5 Rockets win in Dundee. The Flyers again ended the Racers unbeaten run and in doing so denied the Edinburgh side the Autumn Cup as they lost out by a point to Whitley Bay Warriors and in doing so just missed out on a Grand Slam. The Flyers Autumn Cup campaign ended with the following record: **P 14 W 6 D 0 L 8 F 72 A 77 Pts 12**

Petrie broke his arm in early January but the newly formed Kestrels were continuing to find their wings as they lost narrowly 8-7 to Glasgow Juniors: G Latto 2, D Latto 2, W Nicholson, G Ramsay, C Cottrell were the scorers. The Flyers first ever Icy Smith wins were recorded, a 5-4 success over Glasgow Dynamos then a 9-5 win over the Ayr Bruins put them into the final. They met the Racers over two legs and lost 9-3 at home and 9-2 in Edinburgh. These games were late in the season yet they had run the eventual Champions Racers close over the league campaign and finished a creditable fourth: **P 14 W 8 D 2 L 4 F 82 A 67 Pts 18** Jimmy Hunter was the Mirror of Merit winner. Joe McIntosh who returned from Ayr mid-season was voted to the Second All Star Team.

SEASON 1972-73 saw Lawrie Lovell join his brother in Kirkcaldy, the seminal moment in the rebirth of the Flyers as a top team not just in Scotland but in the UK. Joe McIntosh tried his luck in Dundee and the Flyers had a 20 year old Canadian Bruce Libbos from Ontario in their ranks, he was a student studying in Edinburgh. The Kirkcaldy Kestrels took a bow in their inaugural season in the second league. The Autumn Cup campaign got off to a positive start with three wins, including a 15-1 hosing of Paisley with Libbos going nap and then a 4-4 tie with the Racers in Edinburgh. There followed an Icy Cup success against Dundee Rockets which saw the debut of Ally Brennan who had suffered a serious injury months before in a car crash but Fife were happy to give him a chance to rebuild his hockey career, what a move this was. The Flyers remained unbeaten in the Autumn Cup to win the trophy with a record of: **P 12 W 10 D 2 L 0 F 114 A 58 Pts 22** In the last couple of games Bruce Libbos broke his ankle in a 16-3 win in Glasgow and the following week Les Lovell wrote himself into the record books when on 9th December he scored after only SIX seconds against XXXXXXXX the fastest ever Flyers goal. In December the Kestrels recorded their first ever league win, 9-4 against the Glasgow Red Wings and it was noted that Latto brothers Doug (15) and Gordon (14) were particularly prominent. The Racers were defeated 7-5 on 30th December as the Flyers retained the Skol Trophy. In the New Year the league campaign started with a 11-3 win over Glasgow with Canadians Bruce Wingfield and Ken McAuley in the line up. Brennan, Law Lovell and John Pullar were all selected for the GB Worlds team. The Flyers 15 game unbeaten run however came to an end when they crashed 5-3 in Whitley Bay but bounced back with another three victories and a 35-13 goal differential however during this run they lost Les Lovell with a cracked knee cap. On February 16th the Flyers were in continental action as they played a challenge game against The Hague. It should have been a mainly amateur side called Veronica 538 but the Flyers reputation of recent trophy wins saw the hosts bring in some assistance and they created an "All Star" team of 7 Canadians and an American goaltender – the match was played in a recently completed £2M rink used solely for hockey and the Flyers were gubbed 11-0. The team returned home and in a pivotal weekend they lost their unbeaten home record 8-7 to the Racers and the following night in Murrayfield they exited the Icy Smith Cup semi 7-3. On March 3rd they played a Scottish Select and lost 10-9 in a benefit match for Les Lovell but the following night in Dundee the Rockets laid a beating on the Flyers winning 15-2 – their Northern league hopes were in tatters. It didn't help matters that they were missing their GB trio and this forced Pep Young to lace up again. They limped over the line, quite literally, Boreham fell and broke his arm with their final league record of: **P 12 W 6 D 0 L 6 F 79 A 65 Pts 12** There was no Spring Cup for finishing fourth as only top two qualified. Norrie Boreham and Lawrie Lovell tied for Mirror of Merit and although there were no All Star Teams selected the NIHA awarded the Player of the Year to Ally Brennan and Goalie of the Year to Roy Reid. The Flyers started the **1973-74 SEASON** with four imports. Ian Ferguson a right wing from Ontario, Reggie Smith a centre from Alberta was studying in Edinburgh, Ken McAuley born in Canada but living in Boness and the return after his broken ankle of Bruce Libbos. The Autumn Cup was not contested and so the early part of the season comprised teams visiting in the Flyers Skol Trophy competition with the Flyers mainly dominant and the Flyers reciprocating by travelling for other home team Cups. There was a 22-4 Icy Smith thrashing of Paisley who were without home ice and hadn't skated since April and after a stuttering start in the league the professional London Lions arrived in Kirkcaldy and gave the home side a lesson in a 10-1 win in what was dubbed the "fully professional Lions v enthusiastic amateurs". By the turn of the New Year the Flyers sat 2nd in the league table a point behind Whitley Bay who had a game in hand, Smith had returned to Canada to complete his university studies, ex referee Bruce Thomson made his debut for the Flyers but more seriously Law Lovell broke his nose and suffered facial injuries expected to keep him out for a while. A trip to Whitley Bay and a 12-4 trouncing pretty much ended the league hopes for the Flyers. The following week they trounced the Glasgow Dynamos 17-3 scoring 12 in the third period which was a then NIHA record for most goals in a period and finished third place in the league seven points behind the Champions Whitley Bay with the following record **P 14 W 7 D 1 L 4 F 91 A 64 Pts 15**

They bowed out of the Icy Smith Cup 14-4 to the Racers where Pecker Reilly scored an incredible TEN goals but then remarkably progressed to the Spring Cup final when they ousted the Warriors over two legs 14-11. The final against Dundee was to be over two legs but with no ice at Kirkcaldy it was played as a one-off game at Murrayfield on 21st April with the Rockets winning 7-4. The Skol Trophy was won by the Racers and there were losses in the Angus Cup final to the Rockets, the Northumbria Cup final to the Warriors and the Dunelm Cup final to the Durham Wasps. The Flyers trophy cabinet was bare but the Kestrels had had a very successful season as they annexed both the second league title and the Coca Cola Cup. Law Lovell won the Mirror of Merit. Pep Young stepped down as coach due to business reasons for the start of **SEASON 1974/75** and Law Lovell took charge as player-coach. Ally Brennan went back at Ayr, Dave Medd went abroad and Ken McAuley to Canada. Joe McIntosh had once again returned late last season, Jim Taylor owing to work would not be available until later in season, so John Pullar was signed. Jimmy Jack was voted most improved player last year and along with Chic Cottrell and the Latto brothers a lot was expected. The Flyers were still holders of the autumn Cup but got their defence off to a poor start going down 7-4 at home to the Rockets. They beat the Dynamos in Kirkcaldy 9-5 which was their 1st win in seven matches stretching back to last season and then saw off Durham Wasps at home who had only won once in Fife since 1966 and then gained revenge against the Rockets in Dundee with a 12-4 win which was their biggest home defeat. Whitley Warriors however won the crucial games and a split of points with the Racers meant a 3rd placed Autumn Cup finish behind both those two sides. There was a crucial 11-2 home loss to Whitley at the start of the league campaign and another reverse, 7-4 on the road to the Warriors in March pretty much bookended the league challenge which saw the Warriors take the title with only one defeat, the Flyers finished five behind and a point behind Murrayfield: **P 14 W 10 D 1 L 3 F 84 A 65 Pts 21** The Racers won 6-5 in overtime to retain the Skol Trophy and also won their own Evening News Trophy winning 11-4 in Edinburgh. The Flyers qualified for the Spring Cup final by beating Whitley 4-2, the Final was held over to the following season due to lack of ice meaning another trophy less season. The Kestrels however retained the League but then walked off in the closing minutes of the final of the Coca Cola Cup in Edinburgh due to the refereeing decisions trailing 5-4. Les Lovell won the Mirror of Merit and Gordon Latto was awarded the Kestrels equivalent. So the **1975/76 SEASON** started with the return of Brennan but the departure of young Gordon Latto to Sweden to play in the Frolunda junior team and take up an apprentice joiners position. The first silverware of the season came in the first few weeks as the held over Spring Cup final against the Racers was won 15-6 over two legs. The team continued to be dominant throughout the Autumn Cup campaign but were chased all the way by the Durham Wasps with whom they split the points but the Flyers took the title on goal average **P 12 W 9 D 1 L 2 F 114 A 60 Pts 19**. A few days before Christmas Frolunda U21's visited Kirkcaldy with Gordon Latto and won 10-1. The League campaign stuttered in the opening game when they Flyers lost 10-3 at Whitley Bay. There was a St Valentines Day massacre of Glasgow Dynamos 21-2 as the Flyers, Warriors and Racers battled for the top spot. An important 4-1 win against the Racers kept the momentum going but the Warriors came to Kirkcaldy a few weeks later and struck a decisive blow winning 7-6 in a match where Peat missed a penalty shot. Murrayfield were now in pole position and following an 8-8 tie at Durham where the Flyers were missing 5 regulars on GB World Cup duty the Racers 10-5 victory at Kirkcaldy the following weekend left the Flyers needing a miracle. It didn't happen and they finished as runners up 1 point behind **P 14 W 10 D 1 L 3 F 118 A 57 Pts 21** In the Spring Cup playoff semi final they demolished the Racers 16-7 over two legs and then went on to lift the trophy for the second time in a season when they beat Ayr Bruins 17-7 on aggregate with Law Lovell recording his 1000th point in the NIHA in the 2nd leg. The Bruins had shocked the Flyers 8-1 in the northern final of the Icy Smith final and had gone on to become British Champions by beating Streatham. Additional silverware was added with the Skol Cup returning after an 8-3 win against the Racers, the Angus Challenge Cup after an 8-3 win against Dundee Rockets and the Evening News Trophy after a 9-1 win in Edinburgh. Law Lovell won the Fair Play award and NIHA Coach of the Year, Jimmy Jack was Mirror of Merit winner and Kenny Horne most improved player but despite the haul of silverware and

success the crowds at Kirkcaldy were not what they used to be despite now being arguably the best team in the country – and they would only get better. **SEASON 1976/77** was essentially a repeat of the previous with the addition of the Northern League and British Championship titles to complete the Grand Slam. The records were:

Autumn Cup	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Northern League	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fife Flyers	14	13	0	1	138	47	26		14	14	0	0	153	42	28

The only game they dropped points in was a road game against Durham Wasps on 20th March when with 5 regulars again missing on GB duty they went down 11-10 which ended a remarkable unbeaten run of 32 games. Other records were written in an absolutely dominant season when on 16th Jan they won 28-3 away to Paisley. It was the highest away win ever in NIHA, highest number of goals for, most in a single period (13 in 3rd), highest aggregate number of goals in a game and most scored over a weekend on consecutive nights by one team (40 as they beat Dundee 12-1 the previous night). On the 26th Feb the Toronto Airport Raiders were beaten 6-3 in front of a 2500 crowd, the biggest for 15 years and the first time in 12 years the Flyers had a bigger crowd than the Raith Rovers. Dundee were downed 11-4 in the Northern Final of the Icy Smith and the Flyers were crowned British Champions when they overwhelmed Southampton 27-11 on aggregate (18 in the away leg). The Spring Cup semi final against Racers was a tighter affair but Fife went to the final 10-7 on aggregate where they overcame Whitley Bay 22-14 to take the title and Grand Slam. Additional silverware in the shape of the Skol Trophy 8-1 v Dundee and Evening News Trophy 8-3 v Murrayfield was secured. The Mirror of Merit was won by Gordon Latto, Fair play to Law Lovell and Most Improved player to Brian Peat. Gordon Latto also won the NIHA player of the year award, Law Lovell the Coach of the Year and there were First team All Star selections for Kenny Horne, Ally Brennan and John Gibson. Where could the team go now well **SEASON 1977/78** was always going to be a hard following act. Well they very nearly did it all again. Pullar left to play closer at home in Murrayfield, McIntosh finally hung em up. Billingham Bombers were the new kids in town and when Dundee Rockets dropped out on eve of season the Flyers moved quickly to sign Charlie Kinmond. The destination of the Autumn Cup was essentially decided over two weekends when the Racers won at home 4-2, their first derby win spanning 10 games over two years. The following weekend they beat the Flyers 7-5 in Kirkcaldy. The Flyers finished two points behind the Racers in a bid to retain their title for the 3rd year in a row: **P 12 W 10 D 0 L 2 F 120 A 57 Pts 20** The Flyers picked up the Slapshot Trophy when they beat the Racers 3-1 in Murrayfield. The trophy was to help publicise the movie of that name that had just been released although there was no evidence of any Hanson or Ogie Ogilthorpe type action in the game. STV captured the game and highlights were shown on Scotsport on Boxing Day – oh the potential irony! There must be something of a record for the Kestrels who on Saturday November 26th played Canadian side HMSC Algon Quin, who were docked at Rosyth at 7.30 am and won 9-4, that evening they crushed Billingham Buccaneers 24-4 when 12 year old Craig Dickson got the last 10 minutes between the pipes and then went to Ayr on Sunday morning and won 6-0 – three games in a little over 24 hours. The Flyers were clearly still at the top pf their game in in the Norther League they got the netter of old foes the Warriors and Racers to take the title again by two points **P 12 W 10 D 1 L 1 F 113 A 49 Pts 21** They once again advanced to the final of the Icy Smith after a 9-4 win over the Warriors and retained their British Champions crown by once again drubbing Southampton on a 23-5 aggregate. Les Lovell played his final ever game in the 2nd leg and scored. With the ice no longer available in Kirkcaldy the team withdrew from the Spring Cup playoffs not before retaining the Skol Cup with a 6-3 win over Racers. Gordon Latto was Mirror of Merit winner, Willie Cottrell Most Improved player and the Fairplay award went to Les Lovell. The following **SEASON 1978/79** the Flyers came mighty close again to success. The Autumn Cup was reshaped into a two qualifying sections and played later in the season to avoid a fixture crunch with the league. More Winter/Spring than Autumn Cup. The Flyers topped their section with Durham Wasps, Ayr Bruins and Sunderland Chiefs and met Whitley Bay Warriors in the semi-final

which they won 14-9 over the two legs. The Racers were in no mood to relinquish their grip on the trophy and in what were essentially the final two games of the season they were also only two wins away from a Grand Slam. The Racers won the first leg in Edinburgh 4-3 and without any ice at Kirkcaldy the Flyers "Home" leg was played in Aviemore where the Racers were stunned by a rampant Fife side who won 12-4 to lift the trophy and crush the slam. The League title race with the Racers who dropped just the 1 point was determined pretty much on the Forth Derby games with the Flyers only two losses at the hands of the Racers **P 12 W 10 D 0 L 2 F 89 A 56 Pts 20** In the Spring Cup the Flyers disposed of newcomers Billingham over two legs 20-15 and lost 7-6 on aggregate to the Racers in the Final. In the Icy Smith Cup the Flyers overcame Sunderland (Crowtree) and Glasgow to meet the Racers in the semi-final which they lost 5-2. NIHA awards were made to Gordon Latto Player of the Year and Ally Brennan Defenceman of the Year – they also both made the First All Star Team. So as the decade drew to a close, **SEASON 1979/80** saw the Flyers play second fiddle to the Racers again. Their 3rd place in the North Autumn Cup record was **P 8 W 4 D 0 L 4 D 41 A 29 Pts 8**. In the Northern League they finished 5th missing the Spring Cup playoffs with a record of **P 16 W 5 D 3 L 8 F 94 A 100 Pts 13**. In the Icy Smith Ayr and Whitley were both beaten on the way to another semi final defeat by the Racers. Gordon Latto still made the First All Star Team but the Racers were the dominant force heading into the 1980's!