The Flyers who had been firmly in the shadows of bitter rivals Murrayfield Racers for the last few years looked to some new faces for **season 1980/81** to revive their fortunes. Canadians Steve Graham, Tony Sgro and Jim Lynch joined the ever improving local youth movement and also John Pullar who returned from Murrayfield and Dundonian Charlie Kinmond. Law Lovell remained player-coach. Graham would be gone after 2 games and Sgro would last only 8 games. Toronto born Jim Lynch was about embarking upon a two decade association with the game in this country. A new rink floor was installed over the summer months which meant that the team had almost no on ice training ahead of their opening game against Dundee Rockets. They did warm up with a 14-3 win against Aviemore the weekend before and optimism was high when a crowd of almost 2000 saw them win the Skol Cup opener 13-7 against the Rockets. The following week a 13-5 hosing of Ayr Bruins at Kirkcaldy and then their first test against Murrayfield. In the space of 4 weekends they lost to the Racers 6-3 and 12-1 at home and 7-2 in Edinburgh and also succumbed 12-10 to the Billingham Bombers. So much for competing with the auld enemy. In mid November Law Lovell was relieved of his coaching duties and it was a to be decided if he would remain as a player. He didn't after a wrangle to get his release. Bill Sneddon took over behind the bench. At the same time there was another new arrival at the club, a certain "Mabel" – the clubs new £12,000 Zamboni meaning the end to the army of scrapers who skated up and down to clean the ice. Mabel would make a name for herself in later years but that's for another day. Results took an upward turn in December following the signing of Neil McKay and Steve Crummey, both of whom had earlier played for Aviemore Blackhawks. McKay was an Edinburgh lad who had moved to Canada in his youth. Five wins on the spin was halted in the New Year when they crashed in Billingham 10-5 to the Bombers. A crunching 16-2 win at home against Durham Wasps was followed by yet another defeat at the hands of the Racers. By the end of January crowds had fallen away dramatically and typically they were somewhere between the 600-800 mark. There was further turmoil when Sneddon stepped down from coach after a 2-2 draw in Glasgow where he had waded into the Fife faithful to engage in what was described as a "heated exchange". Kenny Horne took over as caretaker coach. There was no separate Autumn Cup competition this season with the winners being the best placed team in the league at the halfway stage which was Murrayfield. In the league the Flyers were battling for 3rd place to gain a Spring Cup playoff berth. They eventually finished with a record of P 28 W 15 D 2 L 11 F 231 A 145 Pts 32 a point behind Durham Wasps in fourth and were rewarded with a semi final meeting with the Racers. Murrayfield had recorded further victories in the Icy Smith semi final 8-3, Radio Forth Trophy 9-8 on aggregate and had won the Skol Trophy with a 11-1 win in Kirkcaldy. The Edinburgh side won both legs 7-5 and 9-3 on their way to meet Billingham in the final (which was never contested). A new coach was on board for **season 1981/82**, Swede Ake Alm who had coached in Edinburgh and the previous couple of years in Liverpool. His player profile in the first programme of the season had an interesting comment: Miscellaneous Dislikes – "Poor standard of refereeing in Scotland and getting up in the morning!" Young Andy Donald would share netminding duties with John Pullar and the season would start with the rest of the roster home based. The opening weekend saw a 5-4 home loss to Glasgow Dynamos followed 24 hours later by a 10-2 demolition in Edinburgh from the Racers in a game that saw the debut of some 14 year old kid called Tony Hand. Then it happened, 26th September with Jim Lynch back in the line-up the Racers came to Kirkcaldy and were beaten 5-2 with a hat trick from Andy 'Linky' Linton and goals from Allan 'Bean' Anderson and Lynch. The Flyers first win in 18 games going back over two years. The next again weekend the emerging Dundee Rockets roasted their Fife opponents 13-1 in Fife and 14-2 in Dundee. Charlie Kinmond quit his five year association with Fife and high tailed it back over the Tay Bridge. Results remained up and down on a weekly basis, routinely Ayr and Glasgow were beaten but there were some big scores against when they met the Racers and Rockets. Before the year was out the Northern Ice Hockey League had collapsed "through financial and administrative difficulties" Teams decided to limp on though through a committee – a new "Super League" was to be formed from next season. Where have we heard stuff like this before? Linton and Abel both left in February to try heir luck south of the border for the Nottingham Panthers. The Northern Autumn Cup was run for

the last time on a knockout basis with the Flyers beating Glasgow but losing against Durham in the semi-final. The Icy Smith similarly was contested for the last time but did not feature Fife. They finished third in the league with a record of P 14 W 8 D 0 L 6 F79 A85 Pts 16 and once again met Murrayfield in the Spring Cup semi-final. In a couple of competitive encounters they bowed out 3-2 and 4-1 although Murrayfield's crown was now firmly in the possession of the league winning Dundee Rockets who took the final 24:6 on aggregate on their way to becoming British Champions. The **1982/83 season** was the inaugural season of the British Hockey League. Fifteen teams from the Northern League, English League North and the English League South took part. The league was divided into three sections of five teams. Teams in section B played every team once at home and once away while teams in section A and C played teams in their own section four times and the teams from section B twice. Teams in section A did not play teams from section C. This meant that while section A and C teams played 26 games, section B teams played 28. Everyone got that? Flyers were in Section A along with Dundee, Murrayfield, Glasgow and Ayr – sort of like a modern-day Gardiner Conference perhaps? Alm retired from playing to take up coaching from behind the bench. Jim Lynch returned as captain and the Flyers first ever American player was recruited in the shape of 21 year old Detroit born Gordon McDougall who would fire 5 goals in his debut against Glasgow Dynamos. He was joined by 21 year old Albertan Chris Reynolds. One notable absentee in the line up was that of Gordon Latto who moved north to join the resurgent Dundee Rockets who won their first encounter 16-1 at Kirkcaldy, a record defeat at home for the Flyers. There were early injuries to contend with, Jim Lynch, Chris Reynolds and Rab Petrie were lost and the Flyers moved to sign 19 year old Kelly Sproxton from Flin Flon, Manitoba, who had travelled with Reynolds, to fill the gaps. Andy Donald made his full debut in a 9-5 win against Ayr on 9th October. Further injuries when McLellan broke his arm and Horne fractured his arm left the squad threadbare to say the least but it was bolstered by the return from Dundee of Gordon Latto. Sproxton was gone by the end of October after Lynch returned. Dundee were once again proving almost invincible but were being pushed hard by Murrayfield whilst the Flyers were clearly no match for those two they were much better than Glasgow and Ayr and so sat third in the Section A table. There were precious few highlights in the season, a 7-7 tie in Edinburgh in January and a first win by a Scottish team in Nottingham in February with new recruit Canadian Charlie Brown scoring. The Flyers completed their league games ahead of all of the other teams and played challenge games for most of the months of March and April. A third placed finish with a record of P 26 W 10 D 3 L 13 F 162 A 187 Pts 23 mean that they would not contest the playoffs as Dundee Rockets went on to win the whole thing. The **1983/84 season** saw the introduction of the Premier League and First Division format that would continue until the disbandment of the British Hockey League in 1996. Nine of the fifteen teams which had taken part the previous season joined the Premier League. It also saw the reintroduction of the Autumn Cup and the first season of sponsorship by Heineken. The 1983 Kohler Engines Autumn Cup was the first edition of the Autumn Cup as a British-wide competition in which 14 teams participated. The Flyers brought in a new Coach, the Stetson wearing Chris Reynolds from Calgary Alberta who had ambitions to coach in the NHL and who stated that the biggest drag in hockey was "Players who don't work hard enough". Gordon McDougall returned and was partnered up front by Canadian Chris Orban from Taber Alberta who so recently passed away. On the blue line fellow countryman John Maskiewich, from Smithers British Columbia, was recruited to shore up the defence. Jim Lynch was gone, he moved across the Forth to the Racers. The Autumn cup was a disaster. Only a home win over Glasgow Dynamos from the eight games played as the Flyers finished with a record of P 8 W 1 D 0 L 7 F 27 A 71 Pts 2. Ominously the Rockets run up 16-2 and 13-1 wins. Orban and McDougall however both put up 17 points. The very first Heineken League game was Saturday 15th October at home to last seasons English Champion Durham Wasps. The match was also the first to have a match night sponsor and the Flyers early season form was forgotten as they thumped the visitors 13-5. A blip the following night at Ayr was forgotten the next again Saturday when the Nottingham Panthers rolled in and were soundly beaten 10-2. Then came those back to back thumpings against the Rockets but a third straight win at home in the league started November when Cleveland were

beaten 7-2. It was a false dawn, only 1 win and a draw in the next eleven matches. What a win it was though as the Racers were downed 11-7 at Kirkcaldy although as was customary now the Flyers were soundly beaten 9-2 a few weeks later on Edinburgh ice. We were now into January and the poor run it was hoped was ended with a 17-5 home spanking of the Whitley Bay Warriors but there were only home wins against Nottingham, Ayr and a late season win against champions Dundee to excite the home fans. If you were a regular traveller that season then you had almost nothing to shout about. The Flyers only road win on the season coming in the last weekend of the season when they won 9-7 against the bottom placed Cleveland Bombers to finish in 7th of 9 with a record of P 32 W 9 D 2 L 21 F 217 A 237 Pts20

Five points behind the Whitley Bay Warriors the Flyers failed to make the top six who entered the playoffs. They were divided into two groups of three. Group A was made up of Dundee, Streatham who were the only team Fife failed to take points against and Murrayfield while Group B was made up of Durham, Ayr and Whitley. The top two sides in each group advanced to the semi-finals and final which were played over a single weekend. The start of the legendary Wembley weekends. Dundee beat Murrayfield 5-4 in the final. And so to the 1980's highlight season the **1984/85 season.** The Flyers returned to the idea of a player coach and Jack Dryburgh and Cameron Killoran scouted 34 year old Ron Plumb to be entrusted with the job, along with new imports Danny Brown and Dave Stoyanovich of securing the Flyers place in the end of season Wembley bonanza. It was a night and day change of coaching from Reynolds who routinely demanded work, work and more work and married to a system that clearly failed to get the best team effort. Plumb's initial interview stated "There is a great deal of potential in the area and the ultimate aim is to put some direction into the sport. We have a wide range of talent in the squad and I want to generate team unity whereby everybody contributes in some sense. The players are starting to believe in themselves and perhaps they are beginning to realise that they are not as bad a hockey club as they thought they were. However they are not professionals and for most of them ice hockey is a hobby. I cannot demand anything from them – I can only ask for it". It was refreshing for the players and the hockey buzz in the town started to go into overdrive. The team were going to be box office, the fans were going to lap up every second of the season, there was going to be exposure of the sport the likes of which had never been seen both locally and nationally. After a 3-2 win against the touring Air Canada side the Bluecol sponsored Autumn Cup action got underway with a 12-5 win in Ayr, Stoyanovich with 5 and Brown 3. The home fans saw a similar blitz the following weekend as the first Division Glasgow Dynamos were hosed 14-2 and Stoyanovich bagged another 5 with Brown netting 4. The blue touch paper had been lit and the following weekend the Rockets were lit up as British Champions Dundee came to town and were defeated 10-8 in front of over 2600 captivated fans with Stoyanovich 4 goals and Brown 3. A legion of Fifers ventured to Murrayfield and rejoiced in an 8-6 win in which the newly recruited Jimmy Pennycook from Dundee scored a hat trick. They went perfect in the group stages when they won 11-6 in Dundee. They would take on Durham Wasps, the winners of the English North and South section playoff, at Streatham on 1st December. Late Friday evening and the car park saw a convoy of busses depart for the lunchtime face off. The Flyers first major final in six years ultimately ended in disappointment with the middle period proving to be costly. The Flyers were ahead 2-1 after the first but lost four goals without reply in the middle stanza before coming up short in the third to lose 6-4. The league and qualification for the Wembley playoffs were however the stated main priority of the season. And by the time they Flyers returned from their Bluecol Cup final defeat to play the Blackpool Seagulls at Kirkcaldy the following night they sat second in the table a point behind Murrayfield who were so far perfect on the season and had two games in hand and also had last seasons fan favourite Gordon McDougall in their ranks. The Seagulls were down 11-6 in front of a modest 1600 crowd. The following week the Streatham Redskins hoodoo was broken with a 11-5 win in Kirkcaldy where there was a dramatic 5 minute delay as Dougie Latto was lifted from the ice on two sticks to hospital where it was later diagnosed as just a badly bruised back. The return game the following weekend in London saw the Flyers narrowly lose 7-6 and then came a record breaking night as the hapless Southampton Vikings rolled into Kirkcaldy.

Stoyanovich bagged 13 goals in a 22-5 rout. The highest number of goals by an individual Flyers player and only one short of the British All-time record set by Dundee Rockets Roy Halpin in 1982. The match was also significant for the debut of three 15 year olds, Bobby Haig, Scott O'Connor and Dean Edmiston. Table topping Murrayfield Racers were dispatched 8-2 as the Flyers sought to topple them from top spot. Dundee were surely fed up with the sight of Flyers as they crashed to their 5th straight defeat of the season against the Kirkcaldy side when they were gubbed 15-3 at the start of the New Year. The defending Champions were losing their crown. Andy Linton had also returned to the club by this time and he hit a hat trick against the Panthers when they visited at the end of January as the Flyers hit the top of the league. The following night in a tense affair in Edinburgh the Flyers escaped with a point in a come from behind 3-3 tie. There was a wobble at Ayr the following weekend when a depleted Flyers side lost 8-2. The ship was quickly righted however with an important 4 points from a road double header in the North East. The defeat at Ayr proved to be the last time the Flyers would taste defeat in the regular season. The Flyers were live on Grandstand on the afternoon of 23rd March when they faced Murrayfield and easily won 9-3 with the auld barn jam packed. The next night the Scottish Cup was captured with a 9-7 win in Dundee and again the Flyers were captured in good form by the STV cameras. With games in hand the Durham Wasps crept up on the rails and pipped the Flyers for the league title by two points. The Flyers had gone all season without a home defeat and the final stats were: P 36 W 27 D 4 L 5 F 325 A 168 Pts 58. The Flyers had Ayr and Cleveland in their playoff section and got their march to Wembley off on winnings ways but only just in a 9-8 come from behind win in front of the TV cameras and another creaking at the seams arena. A 5-3 win at Ayr the following night was a huge step to London and when they won 9-4 in Cleveland it was job done and rounded off by a 15-5 spanking of the Bombers as they signed off in front of their own fans. Around 1000 Flyers fans journeyed south for the big weekend and the fairy tale did have a happy ending. In the semi final the Streatham Redskins who upset the Durham Wasps in qualification were down and out by the midway point as the Flyers cruised to a 12-3 win in the first semi final and awaited to see which of their Scottish rivals they would meet for the Championship. The Ayr Bruins threatened an upset as they led the Murrayfield Racers 2-1 after the first but then capitulated to 13-4 drubbing. The 7000 sold out crowd, including a number of Wasps fans (remember those playoff jackets they had!) couldn't have expected the manner in which the final would be decided. The Flyers produced a scintillating and at times almost dream like performance in the first period to send their fans into seventh heaven and kick start a party that would surely not be premature. Let's just take a moment to recap: Brown from Linton 2.11; Brown from Stoyanovich and Plumb PP 6.27; Plumb from Linton PP 9.50; Hay then scores for the Racers at 15.11; Cottrell 15.51; Stoyanovich from Plumb 16.11; Linton from Brown 18.39 and Brown from Stoyanovich 19.59. A 7-1 lead after the first period but these were the Heineken run and gun days so it needed a 0-0 second period to demonstrate that the Flyers were not going to relinquish having both hands on the trophy. The Racers did win the last period 3-2 with further goals from Stoyanovich and Pennycook but the party was already well underway high in the Wembley stands. The Plumb Line had become the Wembley Wizards. Hockey in Kirkcaldy had reached a pinnacle that it is hard to argue had never been matched before and barely matched since. **Season 1985/86**, would it be the morning after the night before? Player of the year Dave Stoyanovich was always going to be a tough act to follow and his replacement Todd Bidner, an aggressive forward with NHL experience with the Washington Capitals had all the paper credentials to be an even better player in this league but never really cut it on the ice. He didn't make his task any easier by falling foul of the officials and missed five games through suspension during the season. Plumb returned as coach with Danny Brown who upped his personal goals total to 83 and was one of only two players to notch at least a point in all 36 league games. Charlie Kinmond once again joined the Flyers. The Autumn Cup was now known as the Norwich Union Cup and Glasgow were lambs to the slaughter on opening night going down 17-2 in front of 2800 fans and the mad cap new mascot 'The Burrd'. These were the times that, in expectation of a 3000 crowd, fans routinely had to secure tickets during the midweek to ensure they got in. Fife lost 4-3 in Dundee and the next Saturday they suffered a crushing 8-6

reverse to the Racers which ended their 25-match unbeaten home record stretching back to March 1984. It ultimately proved fatal to their qualification hopes as the Racers won the group by a single point to advance to beat Durham in the final. The final stats: P 8 W 5 D 1 L 2 F 65 A 40 Pts 11
The club signed a sponsorship deal with Avco but in the league the Flyers just couldn't find the sort of consistency to mount a challenge for top spot and by early December they had slipped into 5th place where they would finish as the Big Blue Machine Durham Wasps went on to win the league ahead of Murrayfield. One problem they faced in the 1985 portion of their schedule was the absence of first choice goalie Andy Donald due to exams although his deputy Craig Dickson turned in many fine performances. Donald and the Flyers however produced their best form in the run in. Only Durham had a better record than Fife in the closing weeks and Donald finished top of the net minding averages. The Flyers regular season stats were: P 36 W 20 D 6 L 10 F 270 A 196 Pts 46
The Flyers appeared to have the Wembley magic going for them again when they were perfect in their playoff group defeating the Wasps and Bruins home and away. The home game against the Bruins ending into the wee small hours of a Wednesday morning with 2200 still in attendance many of whom were drawn simply say farewell to the retiring Chic Cottrell and Danny Brown who was returning to Toronto after the season to take up a job outside of hockey. Before that though another massive contingent followed the team to Wembley where they met the Racers in the semi final. The high of 12 months ago was replaced by the low of Tony Hand single handedly destroying the Flyers with 5 goals in an 8-4 win. There was double defeat for the Flyers fans who watched the Fife Flames lose out 7-0 to the Streatham Scorpions in the British Junior final. The season was concluded with the Scottish Cup weekend but there was to be no silverware as the Rockets knocked the Flyers out in the semi final. **Season 1986/87** started with a Testimonial game for Chic Cottrell who took over the coaching reigns. The Dryburgh and John Haig summer scouting had acquired two new faces and a familiar face for Fife fans. Experienced ex-NHL defenceman Al Sims would patrol the blue line and Mike Jeffrey would be looked upon to provide points and goals along with the returning Dave Stoyanovich. The Fife lounge was opened as well as better lighting in the rink to facilitate the TV cameras. Such was the interest around hockey in Kirkcaldy the club decided that they would enter the Kirkcaldy Kestrels into the British First Division and recruited Jim Lynch, 21 year old netminder Del Gosse ad 22 year old Mark Mackie as imports to help the development of the local players. The Kestrels would finish a respectable 8th considering they lost Del Gosse at the end of January who returned to Canada with an ankle injury. It proved a financial drain though with crowds around 1000 in the early part of the season that dropped to less than 200. It would be a season of so near yet so far for the Flyers. It was to start positively as the Flyers swept through their Norwich Union Cup section with a perfect record of: P8 W 8 D 0 L 0 F 104 A 44 Pts 16. Mike Jeffrey recorded a record 67 points and the Flyers would have to wait three weeks to find out that the Panthers would be their opponents in the final at the NEC in Birmingham. Once again the Fife faithful packed buses and cars and headed south. It was a match that ebbed and flowed and at no time was there ever a goal between the sides as they battled to a 4-4 tie after regulation. It was to be an overtime heart breaker by Panthers Eratt that denied the Flyers the silverware. Still the best banner I have seen was the "Preserve Wildlife – Stuff the Panthers" banner that day. However after the final things went disastrously wrong for Flyers who were anchored at the bottom of the league after seven games. A partial recovery was staged but just before the turn of the year Flyers took the unprecedented decision to release Jeffrey who had trouble fitting into the overall team despite being top points scorer. He was replaced by 25 year old Steve Moria who quickly established himself as one of the top play-makers and was a key man in the revival. With Moria there was a better blend to the side but ultimately it was the Flyers lack of strength in depth which would cost them dearly. This was accentuated by a horrendous run of injuries including tragically to Andy Linton who lost the sight in his left eye after being struck by the puck in a game against Murrayfield. He courageously decided though to carry on playing the remainder of the season. Attendances were still very good with the Flyrs average of 3120 only bettered by Durham Wasps. The Flyers finished third in the league with the record of P 36 W 23 D 1 L 12 F 317 A 215 Pts 47 Once again the play offs proved to be no

hurdle for the Flyers who progressed to their third consecutive Wembley finals by beating Ayr home and away and sharing the points with Dundee over two games. It was to be semi-final heart break again though, this time against the Durham wasps who trailed the Flyers 5-3 after two periods. A third period dominated by the Wasps saw them score four without reply as they went on to the Final to beat Murrayfield, a little perverse consolation to those Fifers in attendance. Dundee would knock the Flyers out of the Scottish Cup again with a 9-2 win. **Season 1987/88** was to be another bridesmaid season for the Flyers. Al Sims and Steve Moria returned and the import trio was rounded out by Fred Perlini who was last seasons' top scorer with 171 points for the Nottingham Panthers. Also back in the line-up, albeit after a protracted wrangle with the British Ice Hockey Association about his reclassification, was Jim Lynch after his year guiding the Kestrels. The Flyers were given an inkling that perhaps this was not going to be their season in the early stages of the Norwich Union Cup. Having lost 10-6 to arch rivals Murrayfield Racers in Edinburgh Flyers were left with the task of winning by the same margin on their own ice to retain a realistic chance of progressing further in the tournament. It looked a hopeless cause as Racers built up a six goal lead but the Flyers staged one of greatest ever fightbacks ever seen at the rink, eventually winning 11-8. One more goal would have been enough but it was instead a glorious failure as they tied with Racers on points but bowed out with a record of: P 6 W 5 D 0 L 1 F 64 A 38 Pts 10 The Racers would be downed by Durham Wasps in a final that took place in front of the TV cameras in Kirkcaldy on December 5th, The Flyers faced off later that night against the Peterborough Pirates.

Throughout the season the Flyers were involved in a three horse race in the league disputing the leadership with Murrayfield and shock squad Whitley Bay Warriors. It was commendable that Flyers maintained their challenge despite serious injuries to Al Sims (hand) and Steve Moria (knee). There was some turmoil behind the bench too as they changed coach mid season after the resignation of Chic Cottrell and Jack Dryburgh took the hot seat. His arrival behind the bench was the sequel to the Premier League's longest unbeaten run of the season which lifted Flyers back into the title race. The league was eventually lost on the penultimate weekend of the season when Whitley visited Kirkcaldy on the Saturday and won 10-6 and Fife travelled the following night to Edinburgh and coughed up another two points in a 9-6 defeat, the Riverside Rink was bursting at the seams as a record crowd for the season of 3800 were gripped by the action. That was an incredible 2500 more than the Racers average for the season whilst the Flyers average dropped to just under 2800. Fife's record of P 36 W 26 D 2 L 8 F 323 A 215 Pts 54 saw them finish third, two points behind the Warriors and four behind the Champions Racers. Once again the Flyers proved they had the nerve for playoff hockey and went a perfect four for four in their group with Solihull Barons and Murrayfield Racers, their first ever playoff win in Edinburgh. Another Wembley weekend for Flyers fans and in the semi final against the Warriors the game still hung in the balance after the first two period was Fife ahead 7-5. The Warriors imploded in the third period and lost six without reply. Fife would meet the Big Blue Machine Durham Wasps who had similarly dominated their third period in the 11-8 defeat of the Racers who would fail to make the Final showpiece game for the first time. It was the first time that the Wembley weekend had been completely sold out and the Flyers were never ahead in the game and never quite able to peg the Wasps back going down 8-5. Paul Smith and Rick Brebant topped the scoring charts over the weekend above Perlini and Moria who were top scorers across the entire playoff series with Andy Donald , who would never play again for the club following a much publicised mid-air bust up on the flight home, having the best goalie stats and Fife the fair play for least penalty minutes. It was still a still another season without silverware as the Racers won the Scottish Cup with a 9-6 win. The Fife Flames also made the Wembley weekend and again returned north empty handed as they went down 4-2 to the Nottingham Cougars. More importantly however their line up included the following names; Les Millie, John Haig, David Smith, Steven King. There was success for the U13 Kirkcaldy Chiefs who won the British final against Nottingham Tigers. The Kestrels played another season in the First Division which was now regionalised into a North and South section after receiving significant backing by Fife Scottish Omnibuses. Their imports were Steve Marr who was player-coach after being released by the Ayr Bruins, Scott Orban the brother of

Chris who had been released by Murrayfield and future Flyers coach Brian Kanewischer made a handful of appearances as they finished third in the eight team league. **Season 1988/89** continued to pull in the crowds right across the country with the Flyers topping the attendance charts with an average of just under 2900. All eyes were on Fife as they unveiled an ambitious experiment by importing three world class Czech Internationals. Forwards Vincent Lucac and Jindrich Kokrment and defenceman Milan Figala generated huge publicity around the country and equal amounts of attention on the ice from their North American opponents. Jack Dryburgh was persuaded to retain his spot behind the bench before stepping aside midway through the season with Rab Petrie taking over. Despite losing only one game in the Norwich Union group it was a pivotal loss to the Dundee Rockets who topped the group on goal difference over Murrayfield and Fife in third with the record : P 8 W 4 D 3 L 1 F 72 A 42 Pts 11 – The team celebrated 50 years when they hosted Ayr Bruins on 1st October with a certain Frank Morris in their line up. The league push started steadily enough and despite sharing the four game series against league winners Durham Wasps they were never quite able to get close enough to mount a challenge and finished with a third place record of P36 W24 D 1 L 11 F 311 A 231 Pts49. A mid season ankle injury to Kokrment had seen him return home for a number of weeks and the Flyers brought in temporary cover in Tim Cranston who put up an incredible 35 points in only seven games. His style and that of the Czechs were so polar opposite and the silky-smooth hockey that the trio had been accustomed to was too often nullified by the bump and grind of the league and consistency was hard to find. Flyers found themselves in a playoff group with the two North East rivals and they failed to make the Wembley weekend losing heavily in both road games and the point snatched by Durham in Kirkcaldy was enough to ultimately eliminate them. In the Scottish Cup the Flyers lost out in the semi final to the Ayr Bruins. The Flyers returned to a North American brand of hockey for **season 1989/90**. Coach Petrie looked to former Whitley Bay defenceman Mike Rowe and forwards Luc Beausoleil who hopped over the Forth after a season with the Racers and the prodigious Rick Fera who was in his fifth year in the country after playing with Murrayfield, Solihull and Tayside Tigers. The Flyers flopped in the Norwich Union group and finished bottom with just one win, against Murrayfield, in their opening six games. In the league the tale of the tape was quite simple really, they took only one win from 12 games against the top three sides. Champions Cardiff Devils, who gave them a couple of roastings in Wales and second and third placed, by some distance, Murrayfield whom they beat once in Kirkcaldy and Durham. Fera and Beausoliel put up 153 and 124 points respectively but there was simply no additional run support. Fera fished second in points scoring behind Cardiff's ex Flyer Steve Moria whilst Luc was fifth overall. It was a fifth placed finish with a record of: P 32 W 14 D 3 L 15 F 226 A 264 Pts 31 Attendances were down on average by about 400 at a little over 2300. It seemed unlikely that the Flyers would make the Wembley weekend again when they ended up in qualifying group A with the Racers and Wasps but they shocked Durham 13-3 on opening night and although they crashed 5-1 at home to Murrayfield they gained a decisive second win when they were 6-4 winners in Edinburgh leaving a trip to Durham where the already eliminated Wasps won 10-2. It did however mean that a second placed finish paired the Flyers with the formidable Cardiff Devils in the first semi-final and this was a step too far for the team who went down 5-1 as the rags-to-riches Devils went on to win it all. Murrayfield won the Scottish Cup semi final against the Flyers on the way to beating the Devils from that little-known Scottish town of Cardiff in the final. The Flames were once again disappointed in their Wembley final when they lost 3-1 to the Nottingham Cougars. The 80's however had been a fun time to follow the sport and for the Fife faithful there were many more ups than downs. The downs were just around the corner however …..