

Introducing Mr Southend...Frank Banks



Frank started at Southend United in 1958 as a 13 year old and 66 years later remains an integral part of Southend United's community operations.

He was spotted in 1958 by a Southend United Scout, playing in a local park close to his home and Southend United's Training Ground. In 1960, aged 15, he played in Southend United's Reserve team in the South East Counties League for 2 years and signed his first professional contract in 1962, aged 17, making his debut shortly after that, away at Colchester United.

Frank impressed over the next 4 years at Roots Hall and attracted the attention of Hull City in 1966 who snapped him up for a relatively small fee. In a 10 year spell at Hull City, Frank made over 300 first team appearances and was later voted, by fans, as the greatest ever Hull City Right Back. Frank returned home to his beloved Southend United in 1976, going on to make around 100 first team appearances and eventually retiring from the game in 1979, aged 34.

On the 19th of August 1991 Southend United in the Community was launched as part of the Professional Football Association (PFA) and you guessed it, Mr Southend himself was back. Frank was Head of Community for 16 years and left the organisation in 2007 where he went on to work for Essex FA as a Level 2 coaching examiner.

Frank continued to lend his support to the organisation and in 2014 he was successfully nominated by CEO Dale Spiby for the Football League Awards – **Unsung Hero** [Interview: Frank Banks on his Football League Award \(youtube.com\)](#)

To this day Frank remains an integral part of our community, still supporting our Senior Shrimpers café as well as running our walking football sessions every Friday come rain or shine.

Read Frank's Story...

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I was a one man band when I first started with the community, I was earning £200 a week and had to make the organisation self-sufficient after twelve months. I was accountable to Jim Hicks and then later Dave Palmer at the Professional Football Association (PFA) who checked everything was running correctly. I attended bi-monthly meetings with other community organisations across the country and also had to answer to the chief executive of the main football club.

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After twelve months and a lot of hard work I was able to employ another member of staff to help me run the sessions, but I still had to rely on the goodwill of the club staff to help me with the advertising. Back then we used a 'Gestetner' which today would be a photocopier. Not only was I out and about promoting the sessions at schools but I was also delivering the sessions as well as dealing with the necessary paperwork and finance that went along with it. We offered 'free' sessions until the word got out and we were able to charge for them.

We mainly offered football coaching in schools and after school clubs, but slowly began to introduce things like penalty shootout competitions and holiday clubs. The first holiday club that I ran was at Clements Hall and we got about 40 children in attendance. I knew the sports editor for the Evening Echo at that time, so I was able to get lots of press coverage for it. Through my contacts in the game, I was also able to get a number of ex-professional football players to give up their time to coach at the holiday clubs.



By this point there were three of us working for the organisation which allowed us to deliver more sessions it also allowed me more time to secure sponsorships to help sustain the organisation as I wasn't spending as much time coaching. Two of the biggest sponsors back then were C2C and Wimpy. I also managed to secure sponsorship of a car from a local garage which was sign written with my name across it.

Away from the football, we set up our Senior Shrimpers club in 1992 which is still going strong today although the venue has changed somewhat. We used to host it at Boots & Laces which was a nightclub back in the day. It's now hosted in the Shrimpers Bar at Roots Hall. Our first trip that we organised was on the Waverley paddle steamer across the Estuary from Southend Pier to Kent. We also used to organise live singers and bands to entertain the Seniors including Wee Willie Harris who was a rock and roll singer. I love singing myself and used to get up and sing with the bands. At the Christmas meals we used to get the SUFC players to wait on the tables and the manager at that time (David Webb) took up a position as a Bingo caller.

Frank said, 'It was hard work to establish the scheme as people still didn't know about us but also very rewarding and I really enjoyed my time as head of community.'

When asked why he is still involved now, Frank said 'I love the social aspect and interaction with everyone. I enjoy coming into the office as it keeps my mind fresh and active. Otherwise, I would be sat at home doing nothing.'

Kylie Halls (Chief Operating Officer) said 'It's a real pleasure to still have Frank involved with the Community Foundation. I love hearing his stories and seeing old memorabilia that he brings in from his time at the club. Not only does he still support our Senior Shrimpers but also heads up our weekly walking football sessions as well as hosting the hospitality areas for the main club on a matchday, there is no stopping Mr Southend.'



Frank picking up his Unsung Hero award in 2014



Soccer School at Clements Hall in 1991



First Senior Shrimpers trip on the Waverley Paddle Steamer in 1992