

GARY CONNOLLY

ARMY FA REFEREE 2004-2020
ARMY FA CHAIRMAN 2018-2020



THANK YOU

FOR EVERYTHING

DEDICATED-----PASSIONATE -----EXEMPLARY LEADER----- -----TEAM PLAYER

Gary has been the epitome of the committed and professional volunteer who are the very lifeblood of football across the Army.

As an official and Trustee he has never failed to go that extra mile to support the Soldier's game and to ensure the Referee's cohort are brilliantly managed, led and looked after. He is also just a top, top fellow, and doesn't (yet) wear glasses, at least on the pitch.

Thank you for your total commitment to Army Football – our referees organisation is second to none in the game. And, of course, being REME I would have expected no less! “Arte et Marte”

Major General Mitch Mitchell MBE
(Army FA Chairman 2015-2020)



Having first got to know Gary in 2006/7 in Arborfield (DEME(A)) we would meet frequently to discuss Gary's games whether over the week-end or a Wednesday afternoon. He would reflect over decisions, behaviours of players and coaches and questioning why on earth is he putting himself through all this. Now here we are 13 years later, Gary was successful with his refereeing career, he became Chairman of the Army Football referees and has been a fantastic ambassador for Army Referees. As a community we have been blessed with excellent successive Chairmen since I first became involved in 1992, and I do believe Gary is as good as any that I have known.

Major (Retd) Gary Burton

“During his tenure as Army FA Referees’ Chairman, the Army FA have navigated their way through arguably some of the most high profile events in recent history. His leadership and support throughout, however in particular for the Games of Remembrance events, has never waned ensuring that the Referees Department rightly receives the highest of accolades.”

Chris Hastings





04 Referee interaction led by Chairman Lt Col Gary Connolly

I had the pleasure of working for Gary when I was posted to Arborfield and he was the Coy 2ic. A fit keen sportsman he took an interest in my refereeing and I managed to get him to attend the basic course. Bitten by the refereeing bug Gary excelled.

His fitness and management skills saw him flourish on the FoP and it was no surprise to me when he was promoted to L3 in fairly quick time.

Whilst Gary has always supported Army refereeing I know that he has also readily supported his local refs at Reading RA.

Although I left as Gary took over as Chairman I knew that the work ethic he possessed was going to make him a worthy successor to his predecessors.

Gary, I wish you all the best in your retirement although I know you will remain busy. A great referee, Chairman and role model for many referees.

Dec Ford

'Gary took interest in my refereeing career early on, and has been nothing but supportive on and off the pitch, even when I've needed a bit of guidance in the work place he has been at the end of the phone. He's been such a great part of my refereeing and military life that I often forgot the huge difference in rank between us, as I see him as a friend. Very approachable and extremely enthusiastic he will be missed in the organisation. Thankyou you Gary for all you have done for me personally and the wider football community. I look forward to keeping in touch in the future.'

Dec O'Shea



Gary has been a stalwart of the refereeing community over a considerable period. As Chairman of UK (South) referees, his enthusiasm and dedication ensured that his officials were managed effectively and that they were all given the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

He gave total support to the Army Referees Committee; his calm yet determined manner ensured that the benefit of Army referees were always at the forefront of his thoughts.

He was a very respected sounding board to me and I was delighted when Gary accepted the offer to take on the role as Chairman of Army referees as I knew that he would represent the refereeing community exceptionally well and this has proved to be the case.

I would like to congratulate Gary for his fantastic achievements over a full military career, thank him for his support and friendship and wish him all the best for the future.

Lt Col (Retd) Pete Conn MBE
(Army FA Referees Chairman 2012-18)



"Thank you from all our referees for what you have done for Army Referees. It v have added progression and improvement which when you take over a job is yo Andy H but you helped implement his plans and ideas. I have absolutely loved

Knowing Gary first as the Chairman for the UK South, then the Referee's Chairman, he has shown many qualities which will be hard to replicate.

Gary is a great leader who always knew how to motivate his committees and was definitely the right person to be the chairman after Pete Conn which were big shoes to fill. Gary not only offers advice at any time and always has time to speak, but willing to listen to advice from others, which led to the Army FA Referee Executive expanding, improving our social media presence and our corporate image.

His professionalism, attention to detail and empathy will be sorely missed.

I wish Gary well for his pending retirement from the **Military** and the best health for the next stage of his life.

Simon Thorburn



was never going to be easy following on from Pete but it was seamless and you our aim . You have given the Tutors an identity, led of course magnificently by being the Army RDO under your leadership.”

Andy Moore



Mitchell Dennis Teams

It has been a great pleasure to work with Gary. As the Trustee responsible for Army Referees, Gary's commitment has been outstanding. His knowledge and expertise when called upon has been invaluable, and his deliberations were always thought through in a meticulous manner.

I wish Gary and his family every success for the future.

Major (Retd Billy) Thomson
Army FA Secretary



‘Those who know football, who know football in the Army do not talk about the players; they talk about the officials, the coaches, the volunteers who organise the matches and the leagues, those who give their time willing in delivery of the game for all.

Chief amongst these in recent years has been Gary Connolly. We have benefitted hugely from his commitment, his relentless pursuit of excellence amongst his refereeing cohort and his deep-felt love for The Soldiers’ Game.

I echo Gen Mitch’s comment, the referees are really the exemplar to all of us in the football community and it is Gary’s leadership which has ensured this. So thank you Gary, fair winds and don’t listen to those comments about glasses.....

Brigadier Niall Stokoe OBE
Chairman Army FA



“It has been an absolute privilege to work with Gary. Calm, considerate and caring. A superbly effective leader who has a tremendous balance of empathy and understanding and a talent of ensuring those who work with him are valued and respected. I have been fortunate that every Referees Chairman I have worked for has taken a well oiled organisation to the next level and Gary has certainly achieved that in abundance.

An exceptional Chairman and a first class human being.

Enjoy your retirement Gary

Graham Brookland
Referees Secretary



“Gary has been the chairman of our “band” of referees for the past two years, steering the ship through all troubled waters and keeping the crew happy and advised during his tenure.

But more than that, he has been one of us for many years before that.

A colleague, a team mate, a confidante and a friend.

Despite resembling the Duracell rabbit, almost working as hard as myself 😊 , he always had time to discuss issues, using colleagues as sounding boards to important issues and canvassing thoughts before making decisions.

On numerous occasions, Gary has called, early evening, having either just finished his day job or taking a break from it, to ask for advice and assistance.

Gary has moved Army Football Referees forward massively in the last two years and has left a legacy for Nige Bamford to carry on.

Gary, thank you for your huge efforts and do not lose touch.”

Andy Halliday MBE





2011 Army Refs Charity Match- Josh (1011)



Ex Chairmen



2017 Officials





Connolly speech



Mitchell Ref Tie



THANK YOU

GARY CONNOLLY

ARMY FA REFEREES CHAIRMAN
2018-2020