

# GUERNSEY FC HISTORY

Guernsey Football Club was formed in 2011 to offer the island's elite footballers the opportunity to progress and test themselves on a regular basis outside of the Channel Islands. The proposal to establish the club and seek to join the English national league pyramid system was developed by the Guernsey Football Association in an attempt to further advance development opportunities for the island's current and future players by playing at higher levels on a regular basis.

We are an independent, community amateur football club which play in the Isthmian South Central Division at Step Four on English football's non-league pyramid system. The club is owned and run for the benefit of the local Guernsey community and it plays its home games at the Footes Lane Stadium.

The club's vision is to create, develop and maintain a sustainable, successful, financially viable, democratic football club that creates and maintains real and lasting benefits to its members and the local Guernsey community. We are a registered charity and will remain a non-profit organisation with any financial surpluses being re-invested for the future viability of the club and hence the benefit of the local community.

The initial idea to establish Guernsey FC was developed during the 2009-10 season when Guernsey's Senior County Division One representative side enjoyed a successful run in the FA National League System Cup (for league representative sides at Step Seven on the non-league pyramid system and below, since renamed the FA Inter-League Cup), culminating in Guernsey beating the Liverpool County Premier League 5-2 in the final in May 2010. Along the way, Guernsey defeated representative sides from the Kent County Premier League, the Northampton Premier League, the Southern Amateur League, the Hertfordshire Premier League and the Dorset Premier League. The final was held in Guernsey in front of a crowd of over 2,500 and was the first time ever that the FA had allowed one of its competition finals to be held outside of the UK mainland.

Following a 1-0 victory over Jersey to reclaim the Muratti Vase in May 2010, the team were rewarded for winning the FA National League System Cup by representing England in the UEFA Regions Cup preliminary round in Croatia in September 2010. This was a fantastic experience for the players and coaching and medical staff and, although Guernsey enjoyed mixed fortunes by beating Wales 3-0, drawing with hosts Croatia 1-1 and losing to group winners Turkey 3-0, it provided football at a higher standard, was very motivational and gave our players a great desire to improve further and to play more regularly at higher levels.

Over the course of the following few months, the club's founding directors, Steve Dewsnip and Mark Le Tissier, received encouragement from the Football Association, the Guernsey FA, the Combined Counties League (which we were introduced to by the FA), our former official main club sponsor Sportingbet, the island's government (the States of Guernsey) and the island's local football community to develop our plans for the new club further and were delighted when the member clubs of the Combined Counties League voted by a significant majority on 20 June 2011 to allow Guernsey FC to join Division One of their league.

Although our club is very young, football in Guernsey has a long history dating back to 1893 when the Guernsey FA was established and since then has produced several players who have graced the highest levels of the English professional game, including Bill Spurdle (Manchester City), Richard Le Flem (Nottingham Forest & England U23), Ron Farmer (Coventry City), Len Duquemin (Tottenham Hotspur) and, more recently and more famously, our former club president Matt Le Tissier (Southampton and England).

Saturday 6th August 2011 was a historic day for Guernsey FC and the island in general when the club played its inaugural game at Footes Lane against Knaphill FC in the Combined Counties League Division One. That historic day turned into an historic season with the club winning the league title, having lost only 2 of its 34 league matches, with a 7-1 win against second-placed Bedford Sports in front of 2,143 supporters at Footes Lane in March 2012 and then going on to secure the double in its first season by winning the Combined Counties Premier Challenge Cup following a 2-0 victory after extra-time over Premier Division side Colliers Wood United.

The 2012-13 season was a tough campaign. The Green Lions reached the semi-finals of the FA Carlsberg Vase in the club's first season in the competition, breaking its record attendance twice in the historic run. A crowd of 4,290 was at Footes Lane for the semi-final first leg against Spennymoor Town. The league campaign saw countless postponed fixtures due to adverse weather and the cup run. In April, Guernsey FC

played a staggering 16 games in 30 days. The May bank holiday weekend saw GFC play four games in four days and remarkably secure all 12 points to finish second in the Combined Counties Premier League and gain promotion to the Ryman Isthmian League Division One South.

The club's first season in the Ryman Isthmian Leagues was a constructive campaign and had plenty of highs. The club finished in a respectable fourth place but lost 3-2 away to Leatherhead in the play-off semi-final. The Green Lions also became the first team from the Channel Islands to play in the FA Cup during the 2013/14 season, when they took on Crawley Down Gatwick away on 31st August 2013. GFC won the game 3-1 and eventually went out of the competition in the 2nd qualifying round, after losing 3-2 to the Conference South's Dover Athletic.

Guernsey's second season in Ryman South was much tougher. Injuries and unavailability left the Green Lions struggling through October and November and it wasn't until just before Christmas that results picked up. Any hopes of sneaking into the playoffs late on were dashed with a run of four defeats in five games in March. The Green Lions eventually finished 10th in the league before many of the squad were part of the Guernsey FA gold-medal winning side at the 2015 NatWest Island Games in Jersey.

Despite a couple of patches of indifferent form in the first half of the 2015-16 season, the Green Lions found themselves third in the table in the new year and equalled their Ryman South unbeaten record of nine games. But a mixture of poor performances, injuries and bad luck led to a six-game losing run that saw our play-off challenge fade away. However, a new crop of youngsters made an impact, with Robbie Legg becoming the club's youngest goalscorer at 16 when he netted against Whyteleafe in March. GFC were finally drawn at home in the FA Cup against Lewes in the first qualifying round, but unfortunately, a replay defeat to Phoenix Sports in the preliminary round meant they were unable to fulfil that particular goal. We beat our points total and wins total from the previous season, but finished 13th.

The 2016-17 season was GFC's most challenging yet as they battled against relegation for the first time in their history. It took until the end of September to secure the first victory of the campaign and bad luck hit Tony Vance's squad with several lengthy injuries and absences to key players. They didn't manage to win a home game after Christmas, but finally ended their winless away run (that had gone on for over a year and nearly 30 matches) when they beat Chipstead in February and, ironically, it was their away results that kept them up as two more wins and a draw were enough to keep them ahead of their rivals. There was change off the field as Mark Le Tissier took over as Chairman, but the main highlight was the FA Cup coming to Guernsey for the first time in August amidst a tremendous fanfare that included the famous trophy being displayed at Footes Lane. Dave Rihoy's second-half brace in the first-ever FA-Cup match to be contested outside the mainland secured a replay, but GFC eventually went out on penalties at Thamesmead Town. More youngsters made an impact as Thomas Dodds went on to become a key player having only made his debut at the start of the campaign at just 17 years of age. He went on to scoop five awards at the end-of-season gala.

The following two seasons saw the Green Lions in transition with a number of senior players reaching the end of their careers at this level and several new young players thrown in the deep end and having to learn the hard way. There were some tough moments and the wins weren't free-flowing, but the team was starting to develop a new resilient side that saw them grind out some important results against some top teams. 2017-18 was a slightly more comfortable 18th place out of 24 with safety secured with a few weeks to go, but the 2018-19 season went right to the wire. Tony Vance's side didn't win a game during the final three months of the season but ground out enough points against the odds to keep them just ahead of Greenwich Borough. A re-shuffle of the Isthmian League saw a third division created at Step Four and Guernsey was part of a 20-team South East Division, which dropped to 19 when Thamesmead Town folded. That meant only one team would be relegated, with Guernsey securing a draw in the final minute of the last day of the season thanks to a Paris Pereira goal to ensure they stayed up on merit, rather than only being due to a three-point deduction for Greenwich, who went down in 19th.

Guernsey started the 2019-20 season much stronger, despite having to open with seven straight away games due to work on the running track at Footes Lane, and were threatening a play-off place for the first half of the season. The Isthmian League was curtailed in February 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Two fixtures with the Isle of Man were contested in Summer 2020 - the first as the fellow Crown Dependency's first-ever match, and the second was the inaugural Skipton Cup to celebrate relations between the two islands, who had established an 'air corridor' as a result of both being Coronavirus-free at the time. Guernsey won the first Skipton Cup 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at Footes Lane.

Guernsey took the difficult decision to pull out of the 2020-21 season completely because of travel restrictions between the island and the UK mainland, and players turned out for their Priaulx League clubs as the local season continued. The Green Lions did this with the League's blessing and were reinstated

for 2021-22, also being relocated to the Isthmian South Central Division, although they had to start their season in October when restrictions were fully lifted and started their campaign several games behind the rest of the division. The announcement came with just a few days noticed and this meant Tony Vance's side did not have a proper pre-season to prepare. This meant they were a little 'undercooked' in the early parts of the season and took a while to get going, but eventually got up to speed and found some form to move them into a comfortable midtable position, despite a gruelling schedule in February and March 2022 due to catching up on games, exacerbated by four cancellations over the winter due to a rise in Covid-19 cases.

Injuries to key players contributed to a difficult 2022-23 season which saw the Green Lions sitting at the bottom of the table at Christmas. However, a resurgence in form led to six wins and a draw in January and February, which lifted the club from the foot of the table. It looked like Guernsey could avoid automatic relegation, but there were also two relegation play-off places to climb out of. Their improved form continued until they secured their survival with an away draw against South Park in early April.

It was however a landmark season for one of the club's former players, young midfielder Alex Scott, who stood out in midfield for Bristol City in the Championship, winning the EFL Championship Young Player of the Season award and attracting praise from Manchester City Manager Pep Guardiola after an impressive performance in the FA Cup, with the City boss dubbing him an "unbelievable player". In the summer he represented England at the 2023 FIFA U-20 World Cup as they progressed unbeaten from their group before losing to eventual winners Italy in the first knockout round.