

ISSUE 2

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# THE OFFICIAL TALK OF THE TOWN

MATCHDAY PROGRAMME  
OF ASHTON TOWN AFC

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Photograph: Sean Robinson v Wigan Vikings 26/8/13 PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILLY BRISTOW



Welcome to the Hardwick Group Stadium



Tuesday 13/8/2013 KICK OFF - 7:45PM  
NORTH WEST COUNTIES FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

**ASHTON TOWN AFC**

v

**IRLAM FC**





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## A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Good evening and welcome to The Hardwick Group Stadium for this Northwest Counties Division One fixture against Irlam.

Amazingly we are only two weeks into the season and not one side from our division can boast a 100% record. There are many good sides this year and even the likes of Daisy Hill who struggled last year are now transformed and are up there. In fact as there was no game for us on Saturday myself and our committee actually went to watch Daisy Hill take on 1874 Northwich which for two reasons it was a great day. Firstly it was fantastic to go to another club united as a committee and enjoy an afternoon of football without the pressure of hosting a fixture, it was just another time for me to be a proud Chairman for us all to have an enjoyable afternoon as one. Secondly was the attendance. Our league deserve better crowds and I really hope the fans stay following the likes of 1874 as it helps all clubs with much needed revenue with their attendance. Its a joy to see so many enjoying non league football, and on that note it is an absolute pleasure to see new fans watching us here at Ashton Town, I really hope you get the Ashton Town 'bug' as you will enjoy watching this little club develop and build on the fantastic set up we already have.

Irlam today will be a great test. They had a fantastic result against AFC Darwen and they will want to build on that momentum against us.

Behind the scenes the club yet again continues to grow, we now host Saturday Soccer Camp's linked with Ivory Coast and new Everton striker Arouna Kone, as the club builds on the fantastic link set up between Arouna and myself last year. Arouna's Foundation is based at our club, and with his Soccer School now set up and run by Ashton Town, the future looks mighty impressive.

The Saturday Camp is for all children aged 4-12 years old and runs 10am till midday every Saturday, with the children getting free passes to the Town game on later that afternoon. The first session is FREE and then just £3 a session making it one of the cheapest coaching sessions around.

Enjoy the game

Mark

Club Chairman







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# RESULTS/FIXTURES

## Saturday 10th August 2013 Premier Division

Ashton Athletic	1-1	Silsden
Bacup & Rossendale Borough	1-1	Congleton Town
Bootle	5-0	West Didsbury & Chorlton
Colne	0-4	AFC Liverpool
Maine Road	3-1	AFC Blackpool
Norton United	4-1	Runcorn Town
Runcorn Linnets	2-1	Glossop North End
Squires Gate	2-2	Abbey Hey
Stockport Sports	0-3	Barnoldswick Town
Wigan Robin Park	2-3	Alsager Town
Winsford United	2-1	St Helens Town

## First Division

Atherton LR	2-0	Eccleshall
Cheadle Town	1-0	Rochdale Town
Daisy Hill	2-3	1874 Northwich
Hanley Town	1-1	Formby
Holker Old Boys	2-2	Atherton Collieries
Irlam	2-0	AFC Darwen
Nelson	2-2	Chadderton
Northwich Flixton Villa	1-5	Widnes Vikings
Oldham Boro	2-1	Leek CSOB

## Reserve Division

AFC Darwen	3-1	New Mills
Glossop North End	1-2	Barnoldswick Town
Padiham	2-0	Cheadle Town
West Didsbury & Chorlton	1-1	Silsden

## Tuesday 13th August 2013 Premier Division

Barnoldswick Town	P-P	Squires Gate
Bootle	v	Congleton Town
Glossop North End	v	Maine Road
Norton United	v	Alsager Town
St Helens Town	v	Wigan Robin Park
Stockport Sports	v	Abbey Hey (20:00)
West Didsbury & Chorlton	v	Winsford United

## First Division

Ashton Town	v	Irlam
Chadderton	v	Cheadle Town
Daisy Hill	v	Northwich Flixton Villa

## Wednesday 14th August 2013 Premier Division

AFC Liverpool	v	Runcorn Linnets
Bacup & Rossendale Borough	v	AFC Blackpool (20:00)
Silsden	v	Colne

## First Division

AFC Darwen	v	Atherton LR
Eccleshall	v	Leek CSOB
Formby	v	Widnes Vikings

## Friday 16th August 2013 F.A. Challenge Cup Extra Preliminary Round

Workshop Parramore	v	AFC Blackpool
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# MATCH REPORT

## Widnes Vikings FC 3-3 Ashton Town AFC

by Billy Bristow - Tuesday 6th August 7:45pm

*Town were forced to settle for a point thanks to both some uncharacteristic defending and missing a host of chances.*



The splendid setting of the Halton Stadium provided the venue for Ashton Town's second league game of the season and the first ever meeting with league newcomers Widnes Vikings.

Widnes lost their inaugural league game to Cheadle Town, but Town manager John Brownrigg was certainly not going to under estimate a side that in fairness we all knew relatively nothing about. Not surprisingly, Thomas Jump was given a starting jersey after his display on Saturday, whilst Scott Baker was selected ahead of Michael Boyle. New signing and goalkeeper Lewis Reid was also given his first competitive start for Town.

The game got underway amid the glorious late evening sunshine, and was barely over four minutes old when the deadlock was broken. Sean Robinson cut inside from the right and teed up Thomas Jump, who from roughly 25-yards drove the ball under the goalkeeper, for his first ever Ashton Town goal.

All the early action in this game was played inside the Widnes half, with the duo Sean Robinson and Thomas Jump, both taking centre stage. On 10 minutes Jump had his instinctive shot blocked forcing the ball to spring high into the air. Sean Robinson was quickest to react, but his header was booted away from under the cross bar by a Viking defender. It wasn't the end of this double act though as only six minutes later they combined again. This time Robinson beat the offside trap to receive Jump's pass before taking it around the keeper, composing himself and placing the ball into the net.

The surprisingly large Ashton Town contingent in the stands must surely know have believed that their team would go on for a comfortable victory and scoring plenty more goals, but it never quite went to plan.

In fairness Town had a host of first half chances to have put the game well and truly to bed. The unlikely goal threat of Paul Keenan nearly came to light, but his wicked shot from distance was brilliantly parried onto the post by Luke Picken in the Widnes goal. The woodwork also proved to be Town's nemesis again, when Sam Wilkie rose highest from a corner, but he could only watch as his looping header clattered back off the bar.

The home side did manage to grab an undeserved goal. It came when David Wilson's inch perfect pass found Ronnie McCarthy, who blasted home at the second attempt.

So Town went for their half time refreshments, a little disappointed for not have scoring more, but not unduly worried, as Widnes didn't really seem to be enough of a threat to get back into the game . . . . . how wrong we were !



## Half time: Widnes Vikings 1-2 Ashton Town

Cliché, I know, but football is a "funny old game". Whatever got said in the home dressing room at the interval certainly done the trick. Widnes came out flying for the second half and up until well past the hour mark, they had Town pinned back deep inside their own half.

The threat of David Wilson was still ominous when he worked himself into a position to score, but luckily Ste Rothwell was in the right place to stop his goal bound shot, but his threat wouldn't go away and on 54 minutes he managed to equalise. A relatively routine through ball wasn't dealt with and Wilson found himself with a clear run on goal, before slotting past Reid.

Town at this stage were ragged, as they struggled to deal with the home sides newly found attacking prowess, and they very nearly fell behind on 65 minutes. A Viking player produced a lovely turn and volley that left the goal frame shaking after hitting the bar, then the rebound was also sent towards goal, but Kevin Pollard was the hero with a last ditch clearance.

Having survived what seemed to be the worst of the pressure, Town now finally started to move forward, with Liam Rushton and Sam Wilkie both testing the keeper, before the lead was finally restored, albeit in a surprising fashion.

Having won a corner kick, Jordan Lorde strolled over to take the kick, and then to all the spectators amazement his swinging kick somehow went undetected by everybody and nestled into the far bottom corner.

This should have been game over, but worryingly Town seemed to lose their shape and the inevitable equaliser was only minutes away, and it had a certain element of 'keystone cops' about it. The Town back four had ample opportunities to clear the ball, but with Rothwell falling flat on his face, the ball fell to substitute Lee Hughes, who bent the ball home from just outside the area with a delightful strike.

The game played out still in full attacking flow, with all and sundry still not knowing what way the game would end up. Both sides did have more chances but the game remained even, with both sides having to settle for a share of the spoils.

There was massive despondency in the visiting dressing room at the end, and I could see that Brownrigg wasn't happy with the result, but I'm going to edge on the side of optimism as the season is still young.

With Scott Baker and Niall Summerskill only featuring in the tail end of last season, the Town back five only had one really experienced player in Paul Keenan, so they are all still learning about each other's game. It does go to show though how invaluable a player Kevin Brownrigg is to this team. His leadership skills were almost certainly missed (due to suspension).

The youthfulness of the team continues as we move forward, with Wilkinson, Jump and Lorde all still finding their feet at this level. Last season we boasted a much more experienced team, which knew how to shut a game down. I believe that the current crop of players are technically better footballers, but going toe-to-toe in an end to end slugfest is not our strength. A little bit more caution is needed in our game, although the paying punters would disagree as they have been privileged to witness two exciting encounters in start of Ashton Town's quest for glory.



*Weather: Bright sunshine 20c*

*Rating: 5/5 From a neutral point of view it was a terrific game*

*WIDNES VIKINGS: Picken, Davies, McNabb, McMenemy, Garvey (c),*

*Colford (Donnelly-69 mins), Myers (Smith-69 mins), McCarthy, Forsyth, Wilson, Thomas (Hughes-65mins)*

*not used: Madden-Buchanan, Foster*

*ASHTON TOWN: Reid, Baker, Summerskill, Rothwell, Keenan, Pollard, Robinson, Wilkie (c), Rushton, Jump (Patterson-53 mins), Wilkinson (Lorde-55 mins)*

*not used: Olsen, M.Boyle, Goodwin*

*Widnes Vikings Shots: (13) (7 on target), Corners: 4*

*Bookings: David Wilson (33 mins)*

*Ashton Town Shots: (16) (9 on target), Corners 7*



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Pics by Billy Bristow





# Safe Standing

by Daniel Sharples

It has been over 24 years since one of the worst disasters in football resulted in the loss of 96 lives. It is clear that the death of the 96 Liverpool fans at Hillsborough was nothing short of a tragedy, and was a driving force behind the all-seater stadiums we now know so well. But given the evidence that has since highlighted the various factors that led to the Hillsborough disaster, alongside new technology, and thousands of fans calling for it, why are the government and FA still ignoring the Safe Standing Campaign?

Following the Football Spectators Act 1989, all Football League Clubs were to convert to all-seater stadiums. However this was then amended to just include the top two tiers of English football. It is the belief of several organisations that a similar amendment could and should be made to include the Premier League and the Championship.

## Why are the Premier League and Championship different?

It is suggested that the all-seater stadium legislation applies to top two tier English clubs due to the enhanced attendance at these games. However, in England and Wales, standing is permitted at rugby union and rugby league venues, where attendances regularly exceed 17,000 in grounds with standing such as St Helen's Langtree Park. It is also permitted at speedway and horse-racing, alongside football grounds outside the top two divisions. Therefore it is no surprise that there is confusion as to why the top tier football leagues are different.

## Can't the laws change to allow standing in seated stadiums?

The view that it is illegal to stand in an all seater stadium is in fact a myth. This is not the case, even within Premier League and Championship grounds. The law only provides that these clubs should provide seats for all supporters, not that supporters must sit on them. The point is confirmed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport: 'At no point has it been argued that the individual spectator commits a criminal offence by standing in a seated area.' It is in fact Ground Regulations that dictate that there should be no prolonged standing in seated areas.

## Terraces were banned for being unsafe, what has changed?

As seen in Germany, where safe standing is allowed for domestic games, there are new methods of safe standing. The most used is the rail seats, where there is a safety barrier and a seat on every row (or two). The seats are locked into an upright position for domestic games and supporters stand between the barriers. For European games where legislation differs, the seats are simply unlocked.

*Bob Symns (chief executive, Peterborough United) and representatives of Peterborough City Council with Jon Darch (Safe Standing Roadshow) and Hannover 96 staff among rail seats in the AWD Arena (Germany).*



## So what should be changed?

Many fans simply want to just be able to stand up at the game. Some are calling for sections of grounds to be allocated as standing areas as this does not infringe upon government legislation. On the other hand, others argue that this is just a temporary solution, and think that Safe Standing is the way forward. However, it is clear that many football fans that are being forced to sit down are losing patience, and this is a problem that will not just be ignored.



# MATCH REPORT

Ashton Town AFC 4-3 Eccleshall FC

by Billy Bristow - Saturday 3rd August 3pm

Town produce a remarkable fightback to snatch an opening day victory, despite not being at their fluent best.



Photo: Billy Bristow

In the football world, days don't get much better than 'opening day', as the sight of a sun drenched pitch infused with new faces and new expectations, all contributing to the anticipation of a new season.

It may be a new season but manager John Brownrigg was hampered straight away from misdemeanours of the last campaign. Both influential defenders Kevin Brownrigg and Scott Baker were denied the chance to play due to suspension (from THAT game!!) whilst the party island of Ibiza was the culprit of kidnapping numerous other key players, so the 'Gaffer' was basically down to the bare bones for this tricky looking first game.

Tom Goodwin was given the nod to start between the sticks, whilst new signings Liam Rushton and Ste Rothwell were both chosen to start for their league debuts with Town. Paul Keenan was asked to fill in out of position at full back and young Jordan Lorde was the man asked to lead the line up top.

So the 2013/14 season got underway and it was the visitor's from Staffordshire that made the brighter start, as a 3rd minute header was flashed wide of the post.

Ashton Town began a little shabbily but they found themselves ahead after only 9 minutes. A long punt forward by Goodwin wasn't dealt with by the Eccleshall back four, who made the defensive cardinal sin of letting the ball bounce. So with the ball on the way down Jordan Lorde intelligently beat the two defenders (both much bigger than him) with a looping header that rose high above the stranded keeper and dropped into the net. It was to be fair a well taken instinctive goal, from a young lad who looks desperate to prove himself this season.

Eccleshall were left a little stunned, but they were fortunate not to fall even further behind, 5 minutes later. Liam Rushton gathered a loose ball, and quickly let fly from 25-yards, but unfortunately the upright took the full force of the shot, instead of the net. The visitor's though we're always looking to attack, and their endeavours were rewarded on 26 minutes when Kevin Davies played in a ball for Evangelos Tsoulakidis and with the exotically named striker being afforded too much space, he turned and placed the ball across Goodwin and into the far bottom corner. Ashton Town were urged to respond, and they did manage to force the Eccleshall keeper into action, when he firstly tipped Wilkie's shot over the bar and then he done well to hold onto Adam Wilkinson's



Photo: Billy Bristow

goal bound free-kick, but it was at the other end where the next goal would come. The attack came down the Eccleshall right hand side and resulted with a deep cross that was met by the head of Paul Keenan, but unluckily for him, his defensive header fell right on the foot of Tsoulakidis, whom from the centre of goal smashed the ball home on the volley.



## Half Time: Ashton Town 1-2 Eccleshall

I'm pretty certain that both managers wouldn't have been too happy with their sides as they both lacked organisation and were showing schoolboy lapses in concentration. This of course would have infuriated them but for the spectators it meant for a terrific game that flowed from end to end. On 57 minutes Alex McMilam bent in a dangerous looking attempt that resulted in a corner thanks to a mixture of both Tom Goodwin's gloves and the crossbar, but the third goal was just about to come.

Kane Fletcher burst through on goal, outpacing the chasing Ashton Town defence, and with himself just inside the corner of the box; he unleashed a blistering shot that left Goodwin with no chance. It was a very well taken goal.

Town were struggling badly, and if I'm honest, at this stage I didn't foresee a way back into the game, but the fortunes of the game were about to change, and this came about for one reason only, the introduction of Thomas Jump.

The policy of John Brownrigg's Ashton Town is that we play, win and lose as a team. We are not a bunch of individual's and John is always reluctant to single out players for both praise and criticism, but in saying that in would be hard to deny the impact young 'TJ' had on the rest of the team. He is probably one of the shortest players in the league, but he has great pace and is (if I'm totally honest) a constant pain in the oppositions backside.



Photos Dawn Marshall

Town suddenly looked resurgent, but the way back began with a gift from an opposing defender. The tall central defender under hit his back pass, which was gratefully accepted by Sean Robinson, who side stepped the keeper and squared the ball for Liam Rushton too tap in from a couple of yards out. Suddenly Ashton realised that they had time on their side to get something out of the game.

As it happens, the fight back came around much quicker than expected. With Town trailing 1-3, it took only a mere 14 minutes for them to bizarrely be 4-3 ahead.

The equaliser came on 65 minutes when Liam Rushton was on hand again inside the six yard box to drill home after the keeper had parried Jordan Lorde's volley. The build up to this goal though should go unmentioned. Robinson took a quick throw in and linked up with Keenan, Wilkie and Jump, before he provided the cross for Lorde.

Town were in the ascendancy now and nearly sneaked ahead when Pollard's header was tipped onto the bar, but only minutes later Sean Robinson latched onto Jump's neat through ball and lofted the ball high into the net, much to the delight of the home support. It was in all honesty a difficult finish, made to look easy by last season's player of the year for Ashton Town.

Obviously the excitement wasn't to end there as to their credit, Eccleshall responded brilliantly and they could and maybe should have equalised in injury time. Tom Goodwin firstly made a smart save at the expense of a corner, but on the next attack he

unfortunately lost the ball in the bright sunshine, which left the ball loose inside the Town six yard box, and fortunately for Town it fell to a centre half in Jack Warren, with the big lad placing the ball wide of the post with the goal at his mercy. So like last season's opening game, Town begin the campaign with a 4-3 home thriller, only this time they achieved it without really looking that impressive. It is of course more important to have taken the maximum points with a depleted squad, so John Brownrigg I'm sure wouldn't be too unhappy.

Eccleshall could feel a little aggrieved not to have left for home with a share of the spoils, from a game that they contributed a lot to, but from what I seen of the yesterday, I'm certain they will finish further up the table than last season. I would also like to mention that it was nice to see a welcome return of James 'Spanner' Banawich yesterday. James has been a good servant for Town in the past and looks to enjoying himself in the black and blue stripes of Eccleshall.

*Weather: Mainly sunny with a strong breeze 21c*

*Rating: 5/5 Both sides looked a little sloppy at times, but it produced an end to end classic.*

*Ashton Town: Goodwin, Keenan, Summerskill, Rothwell, M.Boyle, Pollard, Robinson, Wilkie (c), Lorde, Rushton, Wilkinson (Jump (54 mins) not used: Morris, D.Boyle, Reid.*

*Eccleshall: Woodhouse, Cooper, Davies, Banawich, Mapperson (c), Warren, Fletcher (Lowatt 77 mins), Gerald, Tsovlakidis (Williams 85 mins), McMilam, Lanaso (Hall 67 mins)*

*not used: Beech, Gilbert Ashton Town Shots: (12) (9 on target), Corners (4) Eccleshall Shots: (13) (6 on target), Corners (8)*



Photos Dawn Marshall



Photos Dawn Marshall



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# MATCH REPORT

By Mark Hayes | 19th July 2013  
TOWN AFC V WIGAN ATHLETIC XI

*Monumentous occasion for Town as a Wigan Athletic XI side are defeated in front of 565 fans.*

*.....What a difference a year makes!*

In this same fixture just twelve months ago, Town were well beaten 5 v 1 by John Doolan's young Latics side, however this year was a completely different story.



John Brownrigg over the last year has built an exceptional young side that went on to lift the clubs first silverware for 42 years last season, as well as finishing an impressive 6th in his first season at the helm. Sam Wilkie and Kev Pollard were outstanding in the middle against Latics, whilst young Scott Baker continued to show his promise from full back. Literally every player could get a mention as John shown the strength of his squad by fielding in total 20 players, however it was centre back Paul Keenan and striker Andy Olsen who grabbed the headlines, by scoring goals either side of the half to beat the current FA Cup holders 2 v 1.

Town Chairman Mark Hayes added 'Obviously the side we played tonight was far from the side that lifted the FA Cup, however I want nothing to take away what we have achieved tonight. We have beaten a young Latics side full of professional players whom we could see very soon knocking in and around the football league.

It's Wigan Athletic's drive, passion and belief that drives me on as the Chairman of Ashton Town. As a young boy I started watching Latics at Springfield Park, and I went on to literally live all my dreams.

For twenty years I was a season ticket holder which gave me the ticket to the greatest roller coaster ride of football ever, there were low's, but there were many more high's. Within them twenty years I watched Wigan Athletic rise from the bottom, to the top, and as daft as it sounds at times, I will do exactly the same here at Ashton Town.

Ok, I am not saying we are going to storm the football league, nor we are certainly not going to win the FA Cup, but we will win things, and we will rise.'

Ashton Town 2 Wigan Athletic XI 1  
Keenan 20 Olsen 61 (pen), Leigh 44

Attendance 565

Another page added to the history book .....  
Onwards and upwards





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All enquiries please contact the Club Chairman,

Mark Hayes on 07851 254936 Or email: [markhayes@ashtontownafc.co.uk](mailto:markhayes@ashtontownafc.co.uk)

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# Simon Says.....

Reading the back pages and now the front pages of the national newspapers in recent weeks one could be forgiven for thinking that the Premier League is now so disconnected from reality that I am sure we will all wake up and realise it is a dream. What I am talking about is the on – off transfer of Gareth Bale, now whilst he is undoubtedly one of the finest footballers in the world the fees now being asked are large enough to wipe out the national debts of a small country. It gives me a headache just thinking and writing the figure of £100,000,000m for one player. Many have said that the Premier League is now playing with monopoly money and I feel that one governing body needs to step in and stop all this madness. Thank goodness for the down to earth pleasure that is non league where clubs and players play their part just for the sake and love of the game. Behind the scenes over the last 3 months or so committees have been busy with their ground repairs, upgrades and general maintenance which might sound very easy but I know takes up hours up on hours each week. Whilst committees have been doing this players have been shedding their excess summer weights and after a few weeks of struggling with their fitness should now be bang on form, bar match fitness which will come after a few hard fought league games.

This season the NWCFL have welcomed three new clubs in Widnes Vikings, 1874 Northwich and Hanley Town along with a number of clubs re naming themselves in Bacup and Rossendale Boro and Northwich Flixton Villa. Hanley Town, have been playing at a good level in the Staffordshire League and will come with the knowledge that clubs from that part of the footballing world provide entertaining football. Meanwhile 1874 are a new entity set up by disaffected Northwich Victoria fans and we will have to see how they do but as always we welcome them to the league and look forward to playing against them.

Over the coming weeks I will be providing reports on football from non league levels from around Europe and the Middle East so I hope you will like them.

**Enjoy your football.**

**Simon**





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# HISTORY OF ASHTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Ashton Town Football Club was originally formed in 1953 as Makerfield Mill FC. Founder, Derek 'Mick' Mycock worked at the Mill and obtained permission from the owners to use their field and to form a mill-workers team. The team was soon attracting local lads and after a short spell in the Wigan Sunday School League, they played in the St. Helens Combination League with many trophies to show. In 1958 they joined the Warrington & District League and went on to champion Division 1 five times in six seasons. In 1962 the club was forced to move from its Windsor Road home due to land development and it was at this time the club name was changed to Ashton Town AFC. Home games were played on a public park pitch at Whithill Street Recreation Ground in Bryn until 1964, at which point the club purchased a piece of land and found a new home at Edge Green Street - previous home of Stubshaw Cross Rovers. In 1969 the clubhouse was completed and was opened by Liverpool & England legend, Roger Hunt and in 1975 the changing rooms were built. During this period the club joined the Lancashire Combination in 1971 and then in 1978 joined the Cheshire County League. The formation of the North West Counties League in 1982 saw Ashton Town join as Founder members. The club has remained in this league since, with the exception of season 1985/6 in the Manchester League whilst essential ground improvements were carried out.



## St Helens Combination League

Division 2 Champions - 57/58, Runners Up 56/57,

Tom Worrell Cup Winners - 56/57, Runners Up 57/58,

Hospital Cup Winners - 56/57, 57/58, Liverpool FA Shield Winners - 56/57,

Rainford Pottery Cup Winners - 56/57, Runners Up - 57/58,

Martin Cup Winners - 57/58, Wigan Cup Winners - 60/61,

## Warrington & District League

Division 1 Champions - 59/60, 60/61, 62/63, 63/64, 64/65,

Depot Cup Winners 60/61, 61/62, 63/64, 66/67,

Guardian Cup Winners - 63/64, 70/71, Runners Up - 57/58,

Dodds Shield Winners 63/64, Jubilee Cup 70/71,

Elizabeth Pilling Memorial Shield Winners 67/68

## Lancashire Combination League

Lancashire Combination Challenge Trophy Runners Up - 70/71,

Lancashire Combination League Cup Runners Up - 71/72,

## North West Counties League

Reserve Division Runners Up 98/99, Division 2 Trophy Runners Up 02/03



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# HISTORY OF IRLAM FC

Mitchell Shackleton Football Club was founded in October 1969 by a group of employees working for Mitchell, Shackleton and Company Limited, a well established engineering company based in Patricroft, Eccles, which manufactures marine and diesel crankshafts. The founding members of Mitchell Shackleton Football Club were Bob Cowlshaw (Chairman), Bill Russell (Secretary) and Charlie Flynn (Treasurer, who served the Club also served as Secretary with distinction from 1981 until his death in 1994). They were ably supported by a Committee comprising of Alf Johnson (now Club President), Ged Moore (Kit Manager) and Stan Catlin (Team Manager). Although the Club has been in existence for over 30 years, Mitchell Shackleton FC can trace teams playing under the Company's banner as far back as 1935. Basing itself at St Michael's Community centre in Peel Green, the Club entered the Eccles and District Amateur Football League in 1970 where it established itself without winning any major honours. After a two-year association with the Eccles League, the Club sought pastures new by joining the Manchester Amateur League in season 1972-73. It was in the Manchester Amateur League that the Club's reputation began to grow, winning the Third Division (1973-74) and Second Division (1974-75) Championships in successive seasons, and in 1975 a reserve team was formed. Between 1976 and 1978, the Club went through a transitional phase with younger players being introduced to the first team, and the formation of a new management team of George Walker, Billy Hall and Jimmy Preston. In season 1983-84, Mitchells finished Industrial A Division runners-up, but ended the season on a high by winning the Gosling Cup. Industrial A Division runners-up once again in season 1985-86, and defeated finalists in the Gosling Cup of 1988-89 signaled the end of the Club's 17 year association with the Manchester Amateur League with Mitchells again looking for a new challenge by joining the Manchester League in 1989. Mitchells quickly found their feet and gained promotion to the Premier Division at the second attempt, finishing as First Division runners-up in 1991. In 1993, Mitchells reached the Gilgryst Cup Final, only to lose out to Woodley Sports in the Final. 1994 saw the formation of a third team which was entered into the Eccles and District League, and in the same year, Paul Traynor departed due to work commitments and Kenny Davies assumed control, ably assisted by Billy Hall. This management team took Mitchells to their highest ever league position in the Premier Division, runners-up to Abbey Hey in 1995. The Club was rocked prior to the commencement of 1997-98 season when Kenny Davies walked out, taking with him several first team players to local rivals Monton Amateurs. Dave Rowan and Craig Woodley, who had forged a successful partnership with the reserves, were promoted and asked to rebuild the side. Roy Bluer, a successful manager in Sunday football, was recruited to run the reserves. By the end of December 1997, the first team were rock bottom of the Premier Division with two points, and were twelve points adrift and facing certain relegation. However, the Club kept faith with its management team and a run of six wins, three draws and only two defeats saw Mitchells catch the side above them. Losses in the next two games saw Mitchells drop into the bottom two, but a dramatic win against fellow strugglers Wythenshawe Town and mid-table Monton Amateurs saw the Club stave off relegation. The experience was too close and the team never finished out of the top six since, finishing fifth in 1998-99, third in 1999-2000 and fourth in 2000-01. The start of 2001-02 season saw the Club change its title to Irlam MS and it moved its base to Silver St, former home of Irlam Town FC. The formation of a new management team of Rowan, former Willows boss Gary Fellows, and team coach Dave Mann, rebuilt the squad and introduced several young prospects during the season. League form fell short of early expectations, but the team did put together a good Gilgryst Cup run to reach the Semi-Finals. Although Mitchells had yet to win a major trophy in the Manchester League, they established a reputation for their competitiveness, fitness and style of play, which is still known and respected throughout Greater Manchester. Mitchell Shackleton were proud winners of the Albert Booth Sportsmanship Trophy in 1998-99, a testament to the spirit in which the Club plays the game. Also, in June 2000, Club Secretary Ian Street was named Secretary of the Year at the Annual General Meeting. In 2002 Mitchells were informed that the move to Silver St was happening, and their existing ground was to be purchased and subsequently be used for what is now to become the new Salford Reds rugby League stadium. The move to Silver St was an exciting affair for all, and the rebuilding of the ground was completed, and officially opened in 2003 with a visit from Brian McClair's Milk Cup winning, Manchester United youth team. Since the move, the Club worked tirelessly to bring the Club into the North West Counties, the highest standard that the Club has seen. Manager Gary Fellows left the Club to take up the position of manager at Salford City FC, and after a season with manager Arthur Burns, who worked miracles with a threadbare side, including winning the Manchester Challenge Trophy, the mantle passed onto Dave Mann to continue the building a side for the following season. A further name change saw Irlam MS become Irlam FC, and the appointment of Warren Dodd as secretary of the Club, from Irlam Rangers Junior Club saw development increase at the ground. Entry into the North West Counties Football League saw the Club enter its highest level of competition since its formation, and the season 2008/2009 became the Club's inaugural season. A midway position in the league at the end of the campaign saw the management team satisfied with the Club's progress. 2009/2010 saw a similar repeat of the previous seasons result, with manager Dave Mann stepping down from his position, with his assistant Ryan Gilligan taking up the post. 2010/2011 saw a fairly turbulent season on the pitch, as the Club pushed for promotion out of Division One. Despite an excellent start to the league campaign and a good run in the Vase, the new year saw league form slump. However, two semi-finals, both in the Challenge Cup and the divisional Trophy demonstrated that the side had great potential. The end of the season saw Ryan Gilligan's tenure as manager end due to work commitments, with Nick Parker stepping up from the reserves. The introduction of a ladies team at the Club for 2011/2012 demonstrates the Club's commitment to football for all at the heart of the community.



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## NEWS FROM OUR VISITORS

Despite a tough start to the season, with fixtures against a number of sides fancied for promotion, Irlam manager Steve Nixon is confident that his side has the ability to challenge at the top end of the Division One table. Steve stepped up from the reserves into the manager's hot seat at Silver Street in March, and with plenty of first team fixtures still to play and the reserve team going well, he had no hesitation in giving the young reserve players he had been working with some valuable first team experience in the remaining games last season. "We had one eye on this season and wanted to be sure we kept the lads we wanted", said Steve. "We knew the last 14 games were going to be tough by playing the younger lads and giving them experience in the North West Counties, but I think that paid off, as we picked up more points in those 14 games than we had in the previous 20, and I was pleased with that.

"We didn't really set ourselves a points target in those games, it was the old saying of taking each game as it came, seeing what we could do and giving the lads the chance to bed in for this season.

"We exceeded expectations really, and on top of that the reserves came runners-up in the Reserve League too, which was a great performance from the young lads".

After a close season break in which his day job took him to Thailand, Hong Kong and Australia, Steve returned to Silver Street at the end of last month and he believes that the squad he has is capable of competing with the best in the division. "We've added a few to the squad over the summer, but they were players who had already been with the club at some stage in the past, and we wanted to get them back. Apart from those lads we will stick with the squad we already had at the club.

"We've got a youth team playing in the North West Youth Alliance League and there are some cracking players there too, and I can see a few of them pushing through into the reserves and even the first team. I'm always happy to add young players to the squad.

"I know youth is not going to carry us through every time, but at this club we need to focus on developing young players and encourage them to aim for playing in the first team".

A tough opening programme has seen Irlam travel to Atherton Colls, and host 1874 Northwich on Tuesday, before AFC Darwen make the trip to Silver Street on Saturday, but Steve is happy with the way his side has been shaping up so far.

"The opening fixtures we have been given are tough but it is a good test for us. The games have been quicker than maybe some of the lads have been used to, and certainly more combative.

"In the game against 1874 Northwich on Tuesday (which finished 1-1), we were under pressure a lot from long balls played forward early but in the last five or ten minutes I thought we might even have snatched a win. So I was delighted with the performance.

"We have set a target for the lads, and that is to have the best ever season for Irlam FC. That's not aiming too high, but higher than we have done before in the North West Counties League, and I think that is a fair reflection of what we should be able to do. "A cup run would be great, earning a few quid for the club, but really the priority for us is to be doing well in the league".

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