

## A History of Histon Football Club

The club was formed in 1904 as Histon Institute FC, and played for 44 years in the Cambridgeshire Football League. John Chivers, chairman of major Histon employer Chivers & Sons, helped to found the football club. The company donated a field then covered in roses for the club to play on, which is commemorated in the rose on Histon's crest. From 1926 the club moved to its current location, where a grandstand was erected in 1934.

In 1948 the club became champions of the Cambs League and joined the Spartan League, winning promotion to its Premier Division in 1951. The "Institute" was dropped from the club's name that season. The top forward in those days was Mo Thurston, who scored 63 goals in season 1949-50. In 1960 Histon entered the Delphian League, which became part of the Athenian League structure in 1963, but struggled at that level. The pitch was re-sited at right angles to the old one in 1960-61, and a replacement stand opened in 1964-65.

In 1965 Histon switched to the Eastern Counties League, where they were to play for the next 35 years. When the ECL adopted a two-division format in 1988, Histon were placed in the Premier Division. In the 1989-90 season, with Alan Doyle as manager, Histon won the ECL League Cup and sold players Lance Key and Shaun Sowden to Sheffield Wednesday and Giuliano Maiorana to Manchester United. The transfer fee rescued the club financially, and a Manchester United team played Histon on 19 May 1989.

Following administrative and financial difficulties in 1993, the club was relegated to ECL Division One in 1995 but were promoted back to the Premier Division two years later. The 1997-98 season saw Neil Kennedy establish a club record by scoring 46 senior goals in the season, and Histon finished 3rd. Finally in the 1999-2000 season Histon won the ECL Premier Division title under the management of former Cambridge United player Steve Fallon, appointed on 27 July 1999, and were promoted to the Southern League Eastern Division.

In the first three Southern League seasons Histon managed 4th spot twice and then a disappointing 10th, which momentarily halted the rise in fortunes experienced under Steve Fallon, but the 2003-04 season saw the club finish 2nd in the Eastern Division to claim promotion to the Premier Division. The following year Histon took on League Two side Shrewsbury Town in the FA Cup 1st Round Proper, setting up a 2nd Round tie at home to Yeovil Town with a 2-0 victory. They lost to Yeovil, but clinched the Southern League Premier Division title on the last day of the 2004-05 season and were promoted to the Conference South.

In their first Conference South season Histon finished 5th, enough to secure a place in the play-offs for promotion to the Conference National. They won their first play-off game away at Farnborough Town 3-0, but lost 2-0 in the final against St. Albans City. In the FA Cup they reached the second round proper. The team managed a draw away at Nuneaton Borough but were defeated in the replay at Bridge Road 2-1 before a crowd of 3,077. The season was also notable for a 5-0 win against local rivals Cambridge United in the FA Trophy.

On 14 April 2007 Histon, now popularly known as the Stutes, beat Welling United 1-0 at Bridge Road to go 19 points clear at the top of the Conference South in the final table. Two days previously, officials from the Conference had passed Bridge Road as fit for Conference National football, paving the way for promotion (the club's fourth in 7 years) to the highest point in the non league pyramid. In the same season striker Neil Kennedy scored his 300th goal for the club with a hat-trick against Havant & Waterlooville.

Histon's 2007-08 season in the Conference National saw the Stutes play their first televised game, Setanta broadcasting the 1–0 home win against Oxford United. Later that season the club broke their record home attendance when a crowd of 3,721 saw Histon beat Cambridge United 1–0 on 1 January 2008. Histon finished the season 7th. The club's record goal scorer, Neil Kennedy, played his last competitive game against Forest Green Rovers on the last day of the season in a substitute appearance.

The second season of Conference National football saw the Stutes finish third, qualifying for the play-offs, where they were defeated 2–1 on aggregate by Torquay United in the semi-final. In the FA Cup Histon reached the third round, losing 2-1 at home to Championship side Swansea City, after beating League One opposition in Swindon Town 1–0 at home in the first round, and Leeds United 1–0 at home in the second round, the first time Leeds had lost to a non-league side. The Leeds United match was on national television, the attendance was 4,103, and the winning goal was scored by Matt Langston.

Histon's fortunes declined after the high spots of the 2008-09 season, as the money ran out. In November 2009 Gareth Baldwin ended his 17-year tenure as chairman of the club, and in January 2010 Steve Fallon's highly successful ten years as Histon manager came to an end. The club finished 18th in the Conference National in season 2009/10 and bottom in 2010/11. Alan Lewer, John Beck, and David Livermore served successively as managers. Histon finished their first Conference North season in 16th place and David Livermore left the club at the end of that season. Dennis Greene took over but left the Club in December 2012, to be replaced by former player Nacer Relizani assisted by the club's youth team coach Brian Page. The duo led the team to Conference North safety on the last day of the 2012/13 season before Relizani stepped down and Page took over the top job.

Histon were now playing with a very young side largely drawn from the club's youth structure. The 2013/14 season saw them relegated from the Conference North to the Southern Premier League. Brian Page kept them at that level in season 2014/15, securing an 18th place finish, but even the return of Steve Fallon in October 2015 could not prevent further relegation to the Southern League Division 1 Central at the end of season 2015-16. In October 2016 Fallon became Director of Football, with Lance Key returning to the club (again) this time as manager. Season 2016/17 however saw yet another relegation, back to the Eastern Counties League where it all started in the 1990's.

After a season of adjustment in 2017-18 at the end of which the team finished 6<sup>th</sup> in the Eastern Counties League Premier Division, 2018-19 saw the club heading in the right direction again as Key lead the side to promotion claiming the league title with an impressive 14 point margin which put Histon back at Step 4 with a place in the Isthmian League North Division for 2019-20.

Under the current chairmanship of John Hall, Histon FC has focused on restoring community links, simplifying ownership structure, repaying debts, cutting costs, introducing ladies teams, and youth development – with a clear pathway from Academy through Scholarship and into the First Team for our young players.