

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 by the rose on the club'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 Cambridgeshire 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 the higher 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, the club 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. At the same time, Giuliano Maiorana was sold to Manchester United for a transfer fee that rescued the club financially. As part of the deal, a Manchester United team played Histon in a friendly match at Bridge Road on 19 May 1989.

Following administrative and financial difficulties, 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 to help the club finish 3rd in the table.

Two seasons later the ECL Premier Division title was won under the management of former Cambridge United player Steve Fallon and Histon was 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. The club 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 and secured 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 and secured a draw 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 its 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 at the semi-finals stage. 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 at home in the first round and Leeds United 1–0 at home in the second round, which was the first time Leeds had lost to a non-league side. The Leeds United match attracted an attendance of 4,103 and was shown live on national television. The winning goal was famously scored by defender Matt Langston who was at the time employed as a postman.

Histon's fortunes declined after the high spots of the 2008-09 season as the money raised from the cup run was not sufficient to maintain such a high level of football. 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 as Histon finished their first Conference North season in 16th place. David Livermore left the club at the end of that season and was succeeded by Dennis Greene.

Greene then left the Club in December 2012 and was 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 fielding 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 the same 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, this time as Manager. However, the club was relegated back to the Eastern Counties League where it all started in the 1990s.

After a season of adjustment, the 2018-19 saw the club heading in the right direction again as Key lead the side to promotion, claiming the league title by an impressive 14-point margin. The club also made great strides during this period in restoring community links, simplifying the ownership structure, repaying debts, cutting costs and introducing Ladies teams. Youth development continued to feature high on the club's priorities list with a clear pathway from Academy through Scholarship and into the First Team for our young players.

On returning to Step 4, the club was unexpectedly allocated a place in the Isthmian League for the first time in its 115-year history. After spending much of the first season in this league in top half of Division

One North, a mid-table finish looked to be on the cards before the season was curtailed due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

After two aborted seasons, the club was moved into the Northern Premier League Midlands Division as part of the FA's restructuring of non-league football. However, the extra travelling proved to be too much of a burden and the club was demoted back to Step 5 after losing a relegation play-off game at home against Northern League side Consett AFC.

For the 2022/23 season the club was placed in the United Counties League for the first time in its history, finishing the season in a respectable 6th place. But after a disappointing start to the 2023/24 season, Lance Key parted company with the club. His replacement is Chris Nunn, who now looks to continue the club's progress with an emphasis on youth as the club strives to achieve the highest level of football it can successfully sustain.