

A Brief History of Pontardawe Town AFC

Although the present club was founded in 1947, football in Pontardawe certainly stretches back over 100 years, into the closing years of the 19th Century, when a Pontardawe club, run by industrialist CF Gilbertson, was among the members of the earliest Swansea League, and won the championship in 1899-1900. The club went on to join the Swansea and District League in the early 1900s, playing familiar names like Swansea Town, Morrision, Skewen and Clydach, as well as long forgotten ones such as Mond Nickel, York Place and Sketty. But honours don't seem to have come their way in the first half of the 20th Century; the club never even reached the top division of the Welsh League and it disbanded during the Second World War.

Reformed as Pontardawe Athletic in 1947, the town club entered the Welsh League, playing in division two (west). The first few post war years brought reasonable success at this level and by 1959/60 they were challenging for promotion, finishing 3rd behind Carmarthen and Clydach, achieving a Division One place a year later despite finishing below Gelli Colliery. But relegation came swiftly in 1961-62, Ponty finishing 19th out of 20 and going back down with Milford. By the mid 1960s the club was struggling in the middle section of the restructured Welsh League and by 1980 they dropped to the lowest division.

A period of comparative success followed in the early 1980s, with successive promotions taking the club back to the top flight of the Welsh League by 1982. 1981 / 82 was Ponty's best ever season - not only did Dixie McHale's team win promotion, finishing second to Brecon Corries but they reached the quarter finals of the Welsh Cup, hosting a Wrexham side containing Dai Davies, Joey Jones and Dixie McNeil. (Record books show the result as 5-1 though the club's history says 4-1).

Competing in the Premier Division for only the second time in their history in 1982-83, Pontardawe Athletic managed to lift the West Wales Senior Cup and in the league they held their own, finishing 13th - but luck wasn't on their side, the league restructured and as Athletic lacked a ground adequate for the Welsh league's self styled "National Division" they were dumped back into the middle section, curiously known as the Premier Division, for 1983/84. Ponty went into decline again, slipping back to the third level of the Welsh league by the mid-1980s, quietly remaining there for over a decade.

The first Welsh league championship - of the Third division - finally came in 1996, after 50 years of membership but the club's progress up the league was almost halted on ground criteria again, as council bureaucracy meant Pontardawe were one of the last clubs at this level to erect a covered stand. But the club was now on a definite upward curve, its youth side lifting the Welsh Youth Cup and MacWhirter League title in 1997, and the senior side gaining promotion to the First Division in 1998. This time the club (now adopting the name of Pontardawe Town) lasted 6 seasons and then returned to the top flight for the 2005-06 season after winning the Second Division and losing to Goytre in the Shamrock League Cup final. Their return to the First division saw them finish third in the table and again finishing runners up in the Shamrock League Cup.

Today we are in a strong position both on the field and off the field. Since 2005 the club has remained in the top flight and during this time the club has won the Reserve League (x2), Reserve Cup (x1), Youth League (x3), Neath League (3rd Div) and at Under 18s the SWFA League (x1), WWYAFL Cup (x1). Also important is the Junior Section which is one of the best in the country running over 20 teams including Academy, Minis, Juniors and Girls / Ladies. Success at all age groups means that the trophy cabinets are bursting at the seams and long may this continue.

Our Achilles Heel - "The Ground" Since the Ice Age the question, and challenge, from everyone to Pontardawe Town is when are you going to get away from the Recreation Ground. Despite its excellent surface we are unable to develop the ground due to us sharing it with cricket. For nearly 15 years the club has been in talks with Neath & Port Talbot Council around this and on 30th July 2014 we finally completed the lease for the new ground which is at Parc Ynyderw in Pontardawe. It has been a difficult task which has not been helped by the pressures councils find themselves under at this time in terms of budgets. As result the planning permission has been submitted and the build will commence as soon as that is granted. We are at the starting line and there is a long road ahead but finally we can see some progress and we thank everyone including the FAW, Welsh League and all our visitors for their patience We will keep you posted!

Pontardawe Town Player Profiles

Steve Reeve (Keeper) : The joker in the pack but last season he once again proved to be one of the top keepers at this level

Luke Harris (Defence / Captain) : Luke is Club Captain this season and he wears the badge with pride, He is a brave and skilful centre half who is leads by example

Kyle Cockings (Defence) - A young and exciting prospect who has pace to burn and skill to match. Hopefully he is over his injuries and if he is he will be one to watch this season

Darryl Jeffries (Defence) : A another young and exciting product of our club structure Darryl was excellent at Youth and First team level last season

Elliot Thomas (Defence) : Elliot is back enjoying his football and that shows in the excellent performances throughout last season

Niall Thomas (Defence) : Former Youth captain who is comfortable both in defence and attack.

Liam Griffiths (Midfield): Another Youth product team who has a great future ahead. A strong attacking midfielder who scores his fair share of goals too

Kieran Howells (Midfield) : Kieran's injuries delayed his come back last season but he will be looking to get a good shift in this year. A solid and uncompromising midfielder who is also part of the coaching team.

Ian Jones (Midfield) : A Town legend (or so he tells us!) and we are sure he will be a key part of this year's first team squad. A great touch and an eye for goal as well.

Alex Wild (Midfield): Alex is another one of our Youth Products and is an exceptional midfielder with a bright future ahead of him. He broke into the first team last season but injuries limited his appearance.

Matthew Ellis (Midfield) : One of this season's crop of exciting youngsters Matthew looks very comfortable at this level and we congratulate him on his Boys Clubs of Wales caps for last season.

Christian Evans (Midfield) – After a number months out due to injury it is great to see Christian back. He has great skill and vision and even can score a goal or two. He is also this season's reserve team manager.

Trystan Edwards (Midfield) : Trystan came through Mini football here at Town and, following his studies, is finally getting the time to show he more than capable of playing first team level.

Ryan Samuel (Forward) –Ryan has been excellent for us since rejoining us this season. A great player with a fair old strike on him

Liam James (Forward) - Leroy scores goals for fun ... he has done it at all levels .. Hard worker and takes his fair share of stick from the lads

Steven Hughes (Forward) – Steven joins us from Pontlliw FC and he will be looking to prove himself at this level. A proven goalscorer at local league level.

Cameron Harris (Defence) - Cameron returns home from a spell in the English Football pyramid. An excellent defender with an attacking mind and brother of Captain Luke Harris

Gareth Lewis (Forward) - A town stalwart and local legend ... enough said

Rhodri Dykes (Forward) - Another product of our successful Junior and Youth set up. A speedster who occasionally pops up in defence!

The Management Team

Jason Dykes (Manager) : Jason led us to First Division safety and a Welsh League Cup Final last season in his first season in charge. Some would say that is not a bad way to settle in !!

Paul Lewis (Asst Manager) : Lewey brought a lot of experience and fun to the role last season and won the award for the weirdest sending off which was at Goytre FC last season!

Mark Jenkins (Coach) : Mark was another newcomer last season and made a real positive impact on everyone at the club.

Kieran Howells (Coach) : Kieran was injured for most of last season so is looking to get back playing. Whilst out of action he was an integral part of the coaching setup.

Andy Wild (Coach) : Andy is a Pontardawe Town stalwart who is a former player, coach, manager and is also a committee member. He has managed a few local clubs but it is great to see him back wearing the Town badge.

Gary Thomas (First Aider) – Since the departure of our previous physio Gary (also club secretary) has taken over the duties. Lacks sympathy for any players that go down like they have been shot though!!!

Programme Squad List

Goalkeeper

Steve Reeve

Defenders

Luke Harris
Kyle Cockings
Darryl Jeffries
Elliot Thomas
Niall Thomas
Cameron Harris

Midfielders

Liam Griffiths
Kieran Howells
Ian Jones
Alex Wild
Matthew Ellis
Christian Evans
Trystan Edwards

Forwards

Ryan Samuel
Liam James
Steven Hughes
Gareth Lewis
Rhodri Dykes