

## **The Management**

**Paul Michael - Mid Fielder:** A very young **Player/Manager/Coach** who took over in October 2010, a product of the clubs youth team when they played in the Macwhirter National Youth League. Paul went onto play for our 1st. team as a teenager before moving onto Haverfordwest, Clevedon Town via Grange Quins and Taffs Well. Having played at Welsh Premier level he knows what is required. He has retained all of last seasons players and added some very useful youngsters. Qualified Coach.

**Alan Davies - Assistant Manager:** Experienced ex professional who played under Nigel Clough for Burton Albion. Alan is highly regarded in these parts for his likable approach, knowledge and tactical coaching. Previously with Pontypridd Town and Cardiff Grange Quins. As he gets to know the players better great things are expected from his vast knowledge of the game.

**Ian Williams - Assistant Coach:** Another recent recruit (February 2015) to our Management team, father of Kyle. Had a big part to play last season at Treowen Stars where he led their Youth team to achieve the Youth East Division Championship. Will be a great help to Paul and Alan in the technical area and at Training.

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**Tom Chorley - Goalkeeper:** Very good shot stopper, brave with a great physique and a long and accurate kick. With brother Jon. still with us, giving him every encouragement Tom will be an important part of the side. Previously with Bridgend Street and Croesyceiliog as a youth. Serves in the R.A.F. but hardly ever misses and travels great distances to play for us.

**Mark Mears - Goalkeeper:** Experienced Welsh League player who has spent recent seasons playing at a lower level. Has played for us between the sticks and as a defender but now understands where his true ability lies. Came back to the fold in January 2015 and has made a very solid start. Started in our McWhirter National Youth side where he was well respected by opponents, perhaps should have played at a higher level when he had the chance but decided to stay "home". Great to have him back, a good talker on the pitch and gives confidence to those in front of him.

**Lee Jones - Goalkeeper:** Very experienced `keeper at Gwent County level where he played for many years for Blaenavon Blues. Transferred to us in January 2015 but has only figured for half a game so far as he struggles to overcome a groin injury. Big, strong and brave which helps him deal with high balls.

**Leigh Sharp - Full Back/Centre Back: Team Captain.** Still only 20 years old and a fixture in the side. Leigh has represented Wales Boys Clubs on several occasions. Despite his age will again be a permanent fixture in the first team this season and will go on to play at a higher level, strong in the tackle, quick and very good on the ball.

**Ian Turner - Full Back/Utility:** Vastly experienced Risca boy who made his debut for us as a 17 yr. old. Now 33 has played at the highest Welsh League level for Goytre United, Bridgend Town and Bryntririon Athletic. Ian has come home to roost and last season helped us achieve a solid defence, although he's a player who can fit into any position and system, knows the game inside out and a great reader of it.

**Daniel Battle - Mid-Fielder:** Ebbw Vale boy who played for Tredgar Town against us earlier this season and was Man of the Match, his control of the middle of the Park and his will to win left a lasting impression. Recruited in January 2015 by Manager Paul Michael. Dan loves to get stuck in and has a powerful shot. Once he settles with his new team mates he'll be a great asset and already looks to be a leader on the pitch.

**Josh Hales - Centre Back/Full Back:** 20 yr. old Centre Back from Rogerstone who fears no-one, quick, strong in the air and a great tackler. Now in his 3rd. season with us and established as first choice Centre Back with Chris Thomas.

**Chris Thomas - Centre Back:** Local boy "Tank" has been with us for several seasons and is an experienced Welsh League player. At 6 foot plus he wins everything in the air and nothing goes past him. Surprisingly good technically for someone with this nickname and has scored some spectacular goals for the club, a very important player who can play elsewhere on the pitch.

**Jonathan Payne - Centre Back:** Local boy "Paney" has come through the youth system at the club. Always focused and never smiles but you know what your going to get from "Painey", gives 100% and doesn't give himself enough credit with the ball on the deck. A Great clubman.

**Josh Clayton - Mid Fielder:** A quiet young man who joined us from Gwent County Rogerstone A.F.C. and quickly became a first team regular. Last season was his best so far and he'll be looking to improve still further. Plays the role in midfield that doesn't always catch the eye but is ultra important to the side. Another great clubman who has worked hard in the summer helping improvement work on dressing rooms.

**Josh Collier - Mid Fielder:** Powerfully built 20 year old local boy who signed in the summer of 2013, A former Youth team player who has stepped up to this level easily. Strong in the air and loves a tackle. For a big lad he has a good touch and gives 110% every game.

**David Hurley - Mid Fielder/Winger:** Dai is a lightening quick, tricky left winger who also came through the clubs youth system. Previous managers failed to get the best out of Dai and so he left for spells with Pentwynmawr, Treowen Stars and Pontypridd Town before returning in January 2013. A very important member of the squad who sets up goals for others and chips in with a few himself.

**Tony Wallis - Striker:** Vastly experienced in his 4th. season with us. Started out at Cardiff City earning professional contracts at the club. On his release from Ninian Park Tony had spells with a number of non league, Welsh Premier and then Welsh League clubs. He brings a wealth of experience from higher levels and last season scored 32 League goals to finish as top scorer amongst Gwent's Welsh League Clubs.

**Alex Beecham - Full Back:** 20 year old youngster who started with our Youth side a couple of seasons ago and broke into the 1st. team Has an old head on young shoulders, loves a tackle. May find a place difficult to come by this season but if called upon will certainly not let us down.

**Aaron Colwill - Mid-Fielder:** 30 yr. old experienced player who is tried and tested at this level, a new signing for us this season, previously with Trethomas Bluebirds and Chepstow Town. Already during pre-season has showed that he can score goals from distance. A committed tackler who gives 100 %. Has already fitted in well with his new team mates. Equally at home playing up front.

**Kyle Williams - Striker: 18 yr. old.** Although with us last season Kyle is like having a new player this season. Joined us during last season and found it difficult to break into the side but this season is set to make a huge impact. Very quick and knows how to score, this young man is set to compliment the older Tony Wallis up front. Was at Swansea City as a youngster and will be a great asset to us.

**Matthew Russell - Centre Back:** 24 yr. old local boy Matthew has previously played at A.C. Pontymister in the Gwent County League but has decided to give Welsh League a go, from what we have seen so far he should have done it before now. Has shown in pre season that he is capable of holding his own at this level and will be a great addition to our squad. Big, strong in the air and on the deck. Equally at home at Full Back.

**Matthew Thomas - Striker:** Another recruited by Paul Michael in January 2015, transferred from Gwent County neighbours Abercarn United. "Tuna" comes with a goal scoring reputation. Has naturally taken a little time to settle at this level but is already one of the boys and everyone is willing him to score the goals that we know he can.

**Nathan Doe - Striker:** Yet another new recruit in January 2015, 18 year old "Doey" was released by the Newport County Academy and Player/Manager wasted no time in snapping up this prospect. Living locally he'll probably be one for the future but has already made his mark for our Reserves and Youth sides. An Andy Carroll look-a-like !

**Robert Aldridge - Striker:** Vastly experienced Welsh League striker, strong and robust with no little skill either. Risca stalwart Robbie actually hung his boots up at the end of 2013/2014 season but by Christmas 2014 had missed it so much he signed on (to play for the Reserves, he said !). If he's asked by Paul to play in the first side, we all what his answer would be. A great player/character to have in the squad.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF RISCA UNITED A.F.C.      *“THE CUCKOOS”*

The club came into being after the war in 1946 when a few local sides **UNITED** to form the new club, they initially played in the Monmouthshire Senior League where after early success they joined the Welsh Football League in 1951/52 season playing in the 2nd. Division East until 1961 before having to drop back into County Football due to financial reasons. Their highest position during those 10 years was 5th.

The club have always been known as “The Cuckoos”, which is in keeping with the legend of the Risca Cuckoo.

In the summer of 1965 Risca United almost folded due to a lack of funds/committee members but was ”taken over” at the 11th. hour by Fernlea A.F.C., a Risca based, Newport & District League side, who actually shared Ty-Isaf Park with the senior club. For a few seasons the “new” Risca United struggled in the lower reaches of Division One of the Mon. Senior League but always managed to avoid relegation. Gradually they strengthened on and off the field and Risca United began its “Golden Era” in the early 70`s.

During that decade “The Cuckoos” strung together an incredible thirteen honours including three consecutive League and Cup doubles, three championships, and were Challenge Cup Winners for five consecutive seasons. The three consecutive League & Cup doubles had never been achieved previously and was recognized by the Mon. Senior League when they presented the club with a one off trophy that proudly sits in the trophy cabinet.

The “Golden Era” continued into the `80`s as more silverware was added including the Gwent Senior Cup, The Gwent Amateur Cup and yet another League and Cup double in 1988/89. besides twice being League runners-up and runners up twice in the Gwent Amateur Cup.

Due to these achievements the club wanted to fulfil its motto, “Progress” and re-joined the Welsh Football League in 1990/91, they were Division 3 runners-up in that first season and then spent three seasons in the 2nd. division before winning promotion in 1994/95 to the Welsh League 1st. Division. Risca United had two seasons in the top flight of the League before slipping back down through the divisions to where they are at present.

In 1995 The Cuckoos reached the 4th round of the Welsh Cup and played at Ninian Park against a full strength Cardiff City in front of 1,200 spectators, for an hour the score remained 0-0 but eventually the “Bluebirds” ran out 4-0 winners. In 2001 the club took part in a two hour BBC Wales TV football drama, “Score”. Filming lasted a week at Ty-Isaf Park where some TV stars, including, Sue Johnston (Brookside & The Royale Family), Eve Tyler (Belonging & Torchwood) rubbed shoulders with “The Cuckoos”. Some of the clubs players even took part in filming at Elland Road in front of 40,000 Leeds United fans !

Later that year the club amalgamated with local junior club Gelli United to ensure a strong youth policy was in place, the two clubs have now evolved into one and the club has reverted to its original name.

In 2003/2004 Risca United were again on BBC Wales TV who filmed their historic 2-1 defeat of Barry Town at Jenner Park in the Welsh Cup, at the time Barry Town were the Welsh Cup Holders and reigning Champions of the Welsh Premier League.

The club now use the excellent facilities of Risca Rugby Club as its social headquarters.

Although the “Cuckoos” have been in the doldrums for several seasons they remain very ambitious and are one of the few clubs in the Welsh Football League that actually lease their ground, being five years into an initial 20 year lease from Caerphilly County Borough Council. The ground is now completely enclosed and further development work is presently being carried out to make it a proper football stadium. Seats have been installed in the stand this summer and improvements to the changing rooms have also been made.

A 3rd. place finish in 2013/14 secured promotion to the 2nd. Division after a spell lasting 13 seasons in the lower tier. Having toyed with the idea of sharing Pandy Park the home of Cross Keys R.F.C. the club now realize that football can only be played on a football pitch so further development of Ty-Isaf Park is being considered for the future and the next project is a clubhouse and floodlights.