

WINGGATE & FINCHLEY

ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION



VS



7:45 PM KO

Tuesday 28th January
Maurice Rebak Stadium
Summers Ln, London N12 0PD



Ever thought of volunteering to help your local football club?

There are many different volunteer roles in non-league football and Isthmian League football clubs need your help with them.

The Trident Leagues and Pitching In's online Volunteer Hub is the place where you can find opportunities and contact your local football club.

Please visit
Pitchinginvolunteers.co.uk
to find out more



**TRIDENT
LEAGUES**
VOLUNTEER HUB
POWERED BY ENTRIN



ISTHMIAN
FOOTBALL
LEAGUE

WINGATE & FINCHLEY FC

Hello and welcome to the Maurice Rebak Stadium! We hope that all associated with the club, the match officials and the staff, players and officials of Cray Wanderers enjoy their stay in N12 this afternoon!

Welcome back to Summers Lane for the first fixture here of 2025! Hopefully the Blues will be able to emulate last season when we reached the playoffs.

This is already our third tie against Cray Wanderers this season, having faced the Wands in the FA Cup second qualifying round back in September. After an Ogo Obi penalty secured a 1-1 draw at our first visit to the new Flamingo Stadium in Chislehurst. This was rather disappointingly followed up by a 1-0 loss three days later to knock us out the cup.

Last season it was Cray who took all six points from our two meetings. A Carvalho goal was a consolation as we were beat 3-1 here at the Maurice Rebak on Saturday 4th November 2023. We were then on the wrong end of a 1-0 scoreline on Saturday 27th January 2024 at Bromley's Hayes Lane.

We make this afternoons' return fixture in BR7 on Saturday 12th April.

Company Name and Number:

Wingate and Finchley Development Ltd, 6014465

Ground: The Maurice Rebak Stadium, Summers Lane, Finchley, London N12 0PD. Tel: 020 8446 2217

Company Number: 6014465

Training Ground: Barnet Lane, Barnet, EN5 2DN

League Match Ticket Prices:

£12 adults, £8 concession, £5 for ages 11-18, under 11 free

Chairman: Aron Sharpe

Vice Chairman: Nicky Rifat, Joe Sharpe

President: Harvey Ackerman

Life Vice President: David Ackerman

Life Vice President: David Wolff

Life Vice President: Peter Rebak

Life Vice President: Steven Astaire

Director: Paul Lerman

Secretary: Andrew Kouroushi

Finance: Liam Blaney

First Team Manager: Ahmet Rifat

First Team Coaches: Ruben Gaspar, Jonny Georgiou, Ricky Machel

First Team Goalkeeping Coach: Gavin King

First Team Analyst: Michael Smith

Kit Manager: Peter Barker

Head Groundsman: Andy Ward

Welfare Officer: Jonny Georgiou

Bar Manager: Lorraine Coleman

Matchday Hospitality: Tony Ward

Programme Editor: Joshua Palmer

CLUB NOTES

Congratulations David Wolff!

Our life vice-president David Wolff has recently received the London FA's Bobby Moore Award for 2024 Grassroots Heroes Award (sponsored by Panini!)

Congratulations David!

Mr Wolff is also chairman of the Maccabi (Southern) GB Football League (since 1970!), overseeing the organisation of the league.

His footballing career began back in the 1950s as a member of the Ivri Maccabi Youth League and is a supporter of West Ham United – once being asked to manage their under 16s team. He joined the MSFL Management Committee in December 1963 as assistant secretary, before rising to vice chairman in 1965 then chairman in 1970. During his directorship, the league has risen from 12 clubs to 66.

David has also chaired the London FA since 2022.

From all at the club, congratulations on your award David!

Potters Bar Town (A)

Our away trip at local rivals Potters Bar scheduled for New Years Day 1st January to be played at Kings Langley FC was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch. It will be played on Tuesday 11 February.

New festive hot dogs!

Visit the tea hut under the main stand this afternoon to try our new festive hot dogs!

The Bird & Berry!
Turkey & studding with a touch of cranberry!

Christmas special
£7.50

New signing!

Please welcome another new signing Matteo Salamon!

A highly rated young goalkeeper joins on a short-term loan agreement from Championship side QPR, having featured in their academy.

Welcome Matteo!

Top scorers 2024/25

Competitive first team games only.
Total games: 23 league, 7 cup:

	Lge	Cup	Tot.
Obi	19	3	22
Lowe	4	1	5
Drakes-Thomas	2	3	5
Frempah	4	0	4
Georgiou	3	1	4
Oladipo	3	0	3
Tanimowo	3	0	3
Deslandes	2	0	2
Newton	2	0	2
Briscoe	1	0	1
Iontton	1	0	1
Restrepo	1	0	1
Ward-Cochrane	1	0	1

LEAGUE RESPECT STATEMENT



“The Isthmian Football League strongly supports the Football Association’s statement that there should be a zero-tolerance approach against all forms of discrimination. Any inappropriate conduct toward others, including but not limited to that based on an individual’s sex, race, colour, weight, size, religion and belief, national origin, age, marital or domestic-partnership status, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression, will not be tolerated and will be reported to the relevant authorities. The Isthmian League and our Member Clubs are committed to promoting equity and equality by treating all people fairly and with respect, by recognising that inequalities may exist, by taking steps to address them and providing access and opportunities for all members of our communities.”



Respect

A VIEW FROM AFAR

To welcome a team that is the ‘Oldest Club in London’, according to their website. Three statements in some way relating to ‘old’, but only one is true; which one? All will be revealed at the end of the article.

- *The world’s oldest football, dating to 1540, is in the Smith Art Gallery and Museum in Stirling*
- *In 2023, Bruce Woodley became the oldest man to play a professional football match when he played in goal for Melbourne Seekers against Potger Athletic, aged 81*
- *The oldest continuously used football ground in England, is Drill Field, home of Northwich Victoria of the Midland Football League, Premier Division*

For the second time this season, we welcome Cray Wanderers to the Maurice Rebak Stadium. The previous occasion was in a FA Cup replay, following a draw at their new ground at Flamingo Park. I am yet to visit, but the Lady Wife and I did pass the ground on our way to see the Blues score three goals at their Paper Mills neighbours; we’ll gloss over how many the home team scored in reply.

We also passed nearby last week on our journey to see whether a world record could be achieved in our presence. It very nearly was. We were visiting the ground of Aveley to watch Lewes lose to Hashtag United (I know, I know,...) Shortly before half time, I joined the queue for chips, to see whether they could beat the record for the longest ever wait at an Isthmian League ground between entering the queue and being served.

The half time whistle was heard after a few minutes and there was time for quite a long chat with one of the stewards and some interesting information about how Aveley had previously played on the opposite side of the road where a new housing estate now stands. Apparently, quite a lot of the area was marshland, so I made

A VIEW FROM AFAR

a mental note to cross Aveley from the list of delightful towns to which I might one day move.

Next, a conversation with the very patient lady in front of me, who explained how she was only queuing on behalf of her nephew, who was sitting in the stand. By now, darkness had engulfed the ground and it was to everybody's delight that we heard the whistle indicating the start of the second half; apart from a small area around one goal, the pitch wasn't actually visible. Fortunately it was in this goal that Hashtag appeared to score, but apparently the invisible linesman had flagged for offside.

It was looking as if they wouldn't quite make the record but they pulled out a wild card when I actually reached the front of the queue, by announcing that a new batch had been put in the fryer and would be 'a few minutes'; we all waited with growing excitement, checking our watches for up to date information, before the potato snack was finally served.

Had they achieved the record? Sadly not quite, the adjudicators decided that they hadn't quite managed to beat the legendary effort at Kingstonian in 2008, but a valiant attempt nonetheless. I was able to carry and present the quality item to the increasingly peckish Lady Wife in plenty of time to see the last twenty minutes of the match.

Which fact is true? It's the football, found in Stirling Castle!. Bruce Woodley was a guitarist with the 1960's Australian group, The Seekers and Northwich sold the Drill Field in 2004; Bramall Lane, Sheffield is now the oldest.

By Peter Brown

WINGATE & FINCHLEY CLUB HISTORY

Wingate and Finchley Football club can trace its roots back to the formation of Finchley Football Club in 1874 making it one of the oldest clubs in the country. Founded by Pa Jackson, who also was instrumental in the creation of the Corinthians, The London Football Association as well as later serving as secretary of the FA, Finchley became founder members of the Athenian League in 1912 after spells in the London League and North London League. They finished fourth in the maiden season, higher than such luminaries as Grays Athletic, Chelmsford City and Enfield.

However their stay was cut short due to the onset of World War One and they would only return for a lone season in 1929 before returning to the London League and forging success. The club's first piece of silverware was won during the 1934-1935 season when the League Cup was captured, with the taste of achievement forming Finchley went on to win the London League in 1936-1937 before World War Two scuppered their winning streak.

It was immediately after the conflict that saw Major Harry Sadow, Frank Davis, George Hyams and Asher Rebak form a Jewish Football Club believing the field of play was a ground of battling the ignorance of anti-Semitism. So in 1946 Wingate Football Club began life in the Middlesex Senior League. The club was named after General Orde C. Wingate who despite not being Jewish himself oversaw the creation of the Israeli Army during the Second World War. The club enjoyed early success and by 1952 they were promoted to the London League.

Meanwhile Finchley, back in the Athenian League, were in the middle of their glory years with the 1952-1953 season proving to be the pinnacle. That year saw their progression to the Third Round Proper of the FA Cup. Defeated along the way were Chelmsford City, Kidderminster Harriers (1-0 at Aggborough) and Crystal Palace (3-1 at Summers Lane) before the Finches were finally beaten 2-0 at Gay Meadow against Shrewsbury Town.

Despite an Amateur Cup semi-final appearance, losing to bitter local rivals Hendon at Highbury in 1965, a sense of decline was starting to emerge. A switch to the Isthmian Premier League failed to stop the halt, and in 1980-81 Finchley were relegated to the second division.

Wingate by now had become a senior club and were competing in the Athenian League. Many players had become members of the Middlesex FA representative side and also partook on behalf of Great Britain in the Maccabiah Games. Disaster struck though in 1972 when their Hall Lane ground in Hendon was lost to the M1 extension and despite a short ground share with Finchley FC the club reverted to junior football.

Wingate finally returned to the senior game with a brief merger with Leyton FC. This partnership proved to be unsuccessful and despite a 1984-1985 League Cup victory, ironically defeating Finchley in the final, both clubs went their separate ways.

In 1991 with Finchley struggling in the Isthmian League Second Division and with mounting debts it was announced that a merger with Wingate would take place in the

WINGATE & FINCHLEY CLUB HISTORY

summer. After extensive refurbishment and a name change of the Summers Lane ground in honour of long time Wingate supporter Harry Abrahams, Wingate and Finchley took to the field for the start of the 1991-1992 season.

Success was immediate and despite starting life in the South Midlands League the club were quickly competing in the Isthmian League and by season 2003-2004 were members of the newly formed Division One North.

In recent seasons the club has continued its growth. A brief flirtation with the Southern League was shortly followed by the arrivals of Manager Michael Stone and Chairman Aron Sharpe. Now back in the Isthmian League a youthful squad achieved seventh position in the First Division North in the 2008-2009.

Stone sadly left the club in 2009 after being offered the post of Assistant Manager at Conference giants Rushden and Diamonds. The club's first team manager in time for the start of the 2009/10 season was former Oswestry Town manager and Total Network Solutions Llansantffraid midfielder David Norman. At the end this season the Club finished in a record high position of 3rd in the Ryman Division One North, mainly thanks to a record run of 17 matches without defeat from the turn of the year, a run which included 13 wins. The Club reached the playoffs but lost out to Enfield Town in the semi-final 3-2 in an incredible match. This paved the way for what was to be a monumental and unforgettable 2010/11 season.

The Club was quickly becoming the most progressive non-league club in the area, thanks to Sharpe's focus on youth development. Bobby Aisien and Medi Alabimba had progressed from Hadley Wood and Wingate to earn professional contracts, and in 2011 over 20 of the U16-18 age group represented their County. Six boys at U16's were given scholarships with pro sides and the club developed into a community club with a Mencap disability initiative, work with schools, and it entered its fourth year of the Flex educational scheme.

A consistent league season for the First Team saw the side match their previous 3rd place league finish and earn a second crack at the playoffs. In the semi-final Harlow Town were beaten 4-2 after extra time, and promotion to the Ryman premier Division was won with a 118th minute winner over Brentwood Town in extra time of the final - The Blues winning 3-2 on their home turf.

This victory was the middle leg of a remarkable and unique Treble. Earlier that season the club had lifted the Ryman League Cup having beaten Dulwich Hamlet 2-0 at Imber Court, and London Senior Cup success was to follow shortly afterwards when Hendon were convincingly beaten 3-1 in the final.

Success flowed throughout the Club this year, with the youth teams also building on their previous season's work as they progressed superbly. The U18's won the Middlesex County Cup, and at U15 level the League Title and three Cup trophies followed (two County cups and the League cup). Even the Under 10's were getting in on the action as they lifted the Spring Cup!

WINGATE & FINCHLEY CLUB HISTORY

The first season in the Ryman Premier Division in 2011/12 saw the side secure safety in this new level with a comfortable mid-table finish, ending up closer to the playoffs than from relegation. The final third of the season saw breakthroughs for youth players Liron Mannie and David Smouha who both played big roles in the first team squad. Meanwhile there was huge cup success at youth level yet again; The Under 18's won the AFA Cup, beating Valley Park after extra time, as well as the London County Cup. The Under 17's won a double as they beat Thurrock in the EJA League Cup final to add to their earlier AFA Cup success having beaten Bethwin 8-1! The Under 16's also got in on the action securing their AFA Cup title beating Woodford FC, which they added later on securing their EJA (Herts) League title.

Success of the youth sides prompted three players - Ross Weinreb, Nathan Sollosi and Joe Sharpe - to earn selection to the Great Britain Maccabi Team for the world games in Israel during July 2013. Meanwhile the Barnet Mencap disability sides grew in strength as they entered the fourth season with the club, with three sides now competing in the Camden Step Leagues. The year ended on a high as McDonalds joined in lucrative sponsorship deal.

The following season, 2012-13, was a difficult one for the first team. Early season poor form led to the departure of Norman in November as ex-Northwood boss Gary Meakin came in. The Club flirted with relegation all season until a momentous 3-2 victory over Lowestoft two days before the final day secured survival. However Norman rejoined the Club in the summer as Director of Football, as veteran defender Daniel Nielsen was put in place as Head Coach. Meanwhile a new Under 21 Development squad was set up to compete in the inaugural Ryman U21 League.

There was continual success for the youth sides. The U17's added the London County Cup to an earlier EJA league title, the EJA cup and the AFA cup. These were also followed up with the League Regional Playoff title. The U16's won two cups in this season, the EJA and AFA trophies.

In 2014 the side faced another relegation fight in the league, which was lost on goal difference on the final day of the season despite a 5-0 victory over Billericay Town. However, when Worksop Town pulled out of the Southern League due to financial problems, Wingate & Finchley were the first in line to earn the reprieve back to the Ryman Premier Division.

The 2014-15 season resulted in a record finish of 12th place in the Ryman Premier League, and at the end of the season Norman departed, to be replaced by Simon Lane as Director of Football. However for the start of 2016 he was replaced by former Northern Ireland International Keith Rowland and the side finished in a stable 13th position. In August 2016 the stadium at Summers Lane was re-named after Wingate FC co-founder Maurice Rebak who had passed away in February of that year aged 95.

WINGATE & FINCHLEY CLUB HISTORY

The 2016-17 season saw the club set a new record, finishing in 5th place in the Ryman Premier League and qualifying for the end of season playoffs. A last-minute defeat at Bognor Regis Town in the semi-final ended the season, but this was a magnificent achievement and saw the Blues win the League's Team Performance of the Year Award.

A ninth-place finish followed in 2017-18 as the Blues narrowly missed out on a second successive play-off berth. There was success for the Under 23 side who won the Isthmian Development League North Division at a canter. Over the summer the Club embarked on an extensive state-of-the-art refurbishment of the stadium, for the first time since 1991's merger, giving the clubhouse a much-welcomed overhaul and making the stadium one of the most impressive in non-league football.

The subsequent three seasons saw a period of uncertainty both on and off the pitch, with short management stints for ex England International Nicky Shorey, ex Premier League stalwart Glen Little and ex West Ham Academy and Wingate & Finchley favourite Steve Clarke, followed by two null and void seasons under the stewardship of Spencer Knight due to the COVID pandemic. However, during this period there were still many successes, including U18s winning County Cup in consecutive seasons and the London Champion of Champions trophy, U23 Development Squad being victorious in Herts League Cup fielding a squad largely made up of Under 18s, while both U13s and U12s secured League Titles.

In the summer of 2021, Club legends Ahmet Rifat (Director of Football) and Marc Weatherstone (Manager) were appointed as a new Management Team after nearly 1000 first team appearances between them. Later in the 2022/23 season Ahmet Rifat was to take sole charge.

Season 2024/24 will go down on record as one of our finest if not the finest. Finishing in 4th position with a record haul of 76 points and scoring 78 goals. Ahmet Rifat's charges made it to the play offs on the last day of the season with a 3-0 win over Carshalton.

We faced local rivals Enfield Town in the play off Semi finals at the QE II Stadium. We narrowly lost a very tight match 1-0 in front of a crowd of 2,225 that night. A fine season was ended, but what memories it brought.

What does 2024/25 hold, a new revamped side, and a manager and coaching squad with that extra years experience. Looking forward to the journey.

THE BOHEMIA

YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY PUB & BREWERY

10% OFF ALL FOOD ORDERS ON MATCH DAY*



CRAFTED IN THE CAPITAL SINCE 2011

THEBOHEMIA.CO.UK



*PLEASE SHOW THIS EMAIL WHEN ORDERING



EARLY BIRD

EQUIVALENT PRICE PER MATCH

- Adult £135.00 £6.43
- Conc. £90.00 £3.80
- Under 18 FREE

*EARLY BIRD AVAILABLE UNTIL 31st JULY
**Concessions over 65 and Students.
***Match Day Tickets £12, Conc-£8, U18 £5
(U18 Season tickets only available on early bird)

FULL PRICE

EQUIVALENT PRICE PER MATCH

- Adult £185.00 £8.80
- Conc. £130.00 £6.19

*FULL PRICE FROM 1st AUGUST
**Concessions over 65 and Students
***Match Day Tickets £12, Conc-£8, U18 £5



Fresh
Principal Club Sponsor

CRAY WANDERERS CLUB HISTORY

The 2024-25 season will be a momentous one for Cray Wanderers FC as London's Oldest Football Club will be playing in a home of their own for the first time in the club's history at Flamingo Park on the A20. Cray Wanderers had been in exile from the Cray's since 1973 when they lost the Grassmeade ground in Chelsfield Road, due to housing development. They moved to Oxford Road, on the borders of Footscray and Sidcup, but when that ground was ruled to be unsuitable for Step 5 football (the Wands were then playing in the Kent League) it became necessary from 1998/99 to play first team matches at Hayes Lane, as tenants of Bromley FC.

However, an off the field victory was obtained in March 2018 as approval by Bromley Council was granted for a new Football Stadium/Community Hub at Flamingo Park in Sidcup which on Monday 26th November received a further boost when approval was given by the GLA (Mayor of London) giving the green light to a bright future for the club and community. The 2018-19 season saw Cray Wanderers now playing in the newly formed Isthmian South-East and were crowned the first champions of the division and despite a season of struggle in 2021-22, last season was the most successful league campaign in the clubs history finishing 5th in the Isthmian Premier.

The first origins of Cray Wanderers are linked to the construction of the London, Chatham & Dover railway line during 1858 to 1860. During their leisure time, migrant workers kicked a ball around, and that is how the club originated in the St Mary Cray village. The pitch at Star Lane is now a cemetery, and is located beneath the nine-arch railway viaduct that spans the Cray Valley. The industrial belt of the River Cray, especially the paper mills, provided much of the club's support up till the 1950s.

Cray Wanderers were a strong force in senior county football at the turn of the century. After being Kent Junior Cup semi-finalists and finalists in 1890/91 and 1891/92 they entered the first ever FA Amateur Cup competition in 1893/94. They had a spell as a professional club between 1895 and 1907. They were a nursery club for Woolwich Arsenal during part of this period. They were one of the founder members of the Kent League in 1894/95, and they won the championship in 1901/02. Other honours included Southern Suburban League champions in 1898/99, West Kent League champions in 1903/04, and Kent Senior Cup runners-up in 1899/1900.

After World War One, Cray switched to the London League where they remained till 1934. In 1930/31 they won the Kent Amateur Cup. Cray rejoined the Kent League in 1934/35, but their four year stay came to grief when 1936 saw the loss of the Fordcroft ground in Cray Avenue, their home since 1898. Cray were forced to drop into a lower level of football, drifting from one temporary pitch to another while the club committee dwindled to a perilously small number. The team struggled badly in the South London Alliance and the Kent Amateur League.

1951/52 heralded a new era, and an upturn in the club's fortunes, when local businessman Mick Slater took over at the helm. The club was elected to the London League and regained its senior status. Cray moved to a new ground at Grassmeade in 1955. Their stay there was a very successful period in the club's history. Drawing extra support from the commuter town of Orpington, they played in the London League and then the Aetolian League. They were three times crowned champions, won the League Cup twice, and also won the Kent Amateur Cup three times.

Cray switched to the semi-professional Metropolitan League for five seasons commencing in 1966/67. In 1971/72 a merger of the Metropolitan League and the Greater London League created the Met London League. Cray moved to Oxford Road in 1973/74. Johnny Biddle and Jimmy Wakeling proved to be successful managers. In 1974/75 Cray won the Met London League and League Cup, scoring 170 goals in all matches that season. In 1976/77 and 1977/78 Cray won the London Spartan League championship.

Cray decided to return to the Kent League in 1978/79. Success came quickly because Cray won the championship in 1980/81, having been runners-up the year before. Their powerful new team under manager Harry Richardson reached the FA Vase quarter final and 5th round in those two seasons. After that, the 1980s decade brought only one more piece of silverware, the Kent League Cup in 1983/84. After finishing Kent League runners up in 1990/91, Cray had a lean period during most of the 1990s, with the exception of 1992/93 when they won the Kent Senior Trophy. A new club chairman Gary Hillman arrived in 1994/95 and Ian Jenkins, a Cray player since 1993, was appointed manager in 1999. By now, Cray were tenants of Bromley FC. As champions of the Kent League in 2002/03 and 2003/04, also reaching the FA Vase

CRAY WANDERERS CLUB HISTORY

quarter final, they achieved promotion into the Ryman League Division One. Five years later at the end of season 2008/09 came further promotion into the Ryman Premier League, the highest level of football that the club has played at since the war.

After parting company with long-serving manager Ian Jenkins, relegation into the Ryman Division One North came at the end of 2013/14. The 2014/15 season started with much optimism but this was soon dispelled with a run of difficult results and three changes in management. Looking very much like having to suffer back-to-back relegations at Christmas and with 10 games to go after suffering a home defeat to the eventual League Champions the Wands went on a 10 game winning run, with a team assembled by the then manager Tommy Warrilow to secure survival and became the Ryman North League Team of the Year.

For 2015/16 The Wands were managed by former player Tony Russell. The Wands finished third in the Ryman North Division losing in the play-off semi-final. Two years later and now in the Bostik League South they were beaten by Walton Casuals at the same stage after an excellent season saw Cray finish third and as top scorers with 112 goals.

The 2018-19 season saw Cray Wanderers now playing in the newly formed Isthmian South-East and after a 15 game unbeaten start to the season the team were on their way and were crowned the first champions of the division on Saturday 13th April and Cray took their place in the Isthmian Premier after a five year absence. Cray were lying 2nd in the division on 7th March, 2020 but the continuing escalation of Coronavirus led to the season being considered null and void. The 2020-21 season began and the 4th Qualifying Round of the FA Cup was reached for the second time but with the Wands lying 5th in the Isthmian Premier the season was curtailed with the introduction of tier systems and two more national lockdowns.

The 2021-22 season saw the start of a new era for Cray Wanderers as Tony Russell and his coaching team departed the club in March 2021 and in April, former Welling United, AFC Wimbledon and Gillingham forward Danny Kedwell was appointed as new manager. However, Danny departed the club at the end of December and ex-Wands player Grant Basey took over in an interim capacity but ex-Bromley boss Neil Smith was appointed on 22nd March to guide Cray through the remaining league games and managed to stave off relegation and became Cray Wanderers first ever full time manager in May 2022 and the club are looking to prosper on and off the field. Cray Wanderers in 2022-23 amassed a record points total for an Isthmian Premier League season with 74 points and also with 78 goals the highest number of goals scored in an Isthmian Premier season. The club finished the regular season in 5th place which is also a first and reached the playoffs for the first time in Cray Wanderers long history losing only to Hornchurch on penalties in the Semi-Final.

The move to the new ground is taking shape and grass pitches were laid for Cray Wanderers youth sides to play on while it was announced on the eve of the 2023-24 season that work is beginning on laying the pitch and the foundations for the ground so it can be ready to play first team football from the 2024-25 season. Cray will finally be playing football at their own ground for the first time since 1973. The club currently have 30+ youth teams + girls teams and the launch of a new academy side in July 2022 is already bearing fruit winning the AoC Sport London Football Men's Regional League F title undefeated in their first season. For the 2023-24 season the club had a Women's team for the first time in Southern Counties East Women's League Division One West and were crowned champions to earn promotion to the Premier and the future for the club is looking rosy.

In November 2023, the 3G pitch was laid at Flamingo Park ahead of the construction of the ground and floodlights were installed and the Women's team were the first side to play on the pitch on 4th February 2024. The ground share agreement with Bromley FC was officially announced would be ending on 9th February and the ground development has continued at a steady pace ever since. Cray Wanderers played their first men's first team game under lights vs Corinthian Casuals in March 2024 and the first pre-season game vs. Forest Hill Park on 6th July and played matches against Sheffield and Bromley, Millwall, Crystal Palace and Tottenham Hotspur XI's with the latter drawing a crowd of 1047. The first home league match vs Cray Valley PM took place on 13th August in front of a crowd of 840 and the start of a new exciting era for the club and also Cray Wanderers played their first FA Cup 4QR tie at their new home vs Tonbridge Angels on 12th October.

CRAY WANDERERS PLAYER PROFILES

Lateef Adaja – Winger – Lateef is a new arrival at Cray Wanderers having joined the club from Potters Bar Town. Lateef came through the Bromley youth set up and played for the U18s and in the FA Youth Cup for the Ravens during the 2021-22 season. During the 2022-23 season Lateef made six appearances on loan at Chatham Town and had a short spell at Burgess Hill Town. He joined Potters Bar Town in November 2023 and made 22 appearances, scoring one goal.

Tom Bonner – Central Defender – Tom is an experienced central defender who joined Cray Wanderers in November 2023 and made 22 appearances scoring twice against Haringey Borough and Hashtag United finishing the season in impressive fashion. Tom came from the QPR Youth system and signed professional forms with Northampton Town in 2005 but went into non-league football joining Rushden & Diamonds after earlier loan spells at Bedford Town & Nuneaton Borough. He later went on to Hinckley United and Ilkeston before joining Dartford for the 2010-11 season and was part of their National South promotion winning side. He made 125 appearances up to 2013 before going on to Cambridge United where he won the FA Trophy in 2013-14 going on to play in the Football League for the U's. He served Dover Athletic on loan during the 2014-15 season before joining Ebbsfleet United the following season making 37 league appearances. He returned to Dartford in 2016 and remained at Princes Park until 2023 announcing his retirement before joining Havant & Waterlooville this summer. Tom has also represented Scotland at U19 level.

George Brooke – Midfield/Winger – George has made his mark with Cray Wanderers this season after coming through the Wands U18s side this season. George made his debut in the Kent Senior Cup tie at Phoenix Sports in September. He has since spent a trial spell at Manchester City and also at Leicester City. George has a great future in the game and made a stylish cameo when he came on for the final few minutes of the match with Enfield Town on 29th December.

Nyren Clunis - Winger – Cray Wanderers are delighted to announce that Nyren Clunis has been retained for the 2024-25 season. Nyren is a versatile midfielder/winger who signed for the Wands from Kingstonian in the summer of 2022 and bounced back from injury last season to make 25 appearances scoring 8 goals. Nyren came through the Dulwich Hamlet youth system and made his league debut in 2009 and went on to make an impressive 486 appearances for Hamlet scoring 117 goals and was part of two promotion winning sides and a former player of the year. Nyren had a testimonial game for Dulwich Hamlet in May 2023. After being released at the end of the 2019-20 season Nyren moved on to Carshalton Athletic and then joined Kingstonian at the start of the 2021-22 season going on to make 44 appearances scoring 3 goals. Nyren has made 62 appearances for Cray scoring 14 goals including scoring in the Isthmian Premier Playoff semi-final at Hornchurch in April 2023.

Kenny Coker - Striker – Kenny is a new arrival at Cray having joined the club from Norwich City. Kenny was born in Atlanta but grew up in the UK and came through the youth systems at Bowers & Pitsea, Billericay Town and Southend United. He came through the ranks at Southend and made four appearances for the Shrimpers in the Football League making his debut on 1st February 2020 vs. Lincoln City. He made four appearances in two seasons before joining Norwich City in 2021 signing professional forms. He went to Chelmsford City on loan last season before joining Wands in August 24. Kenny made his debut in the opening day victory at Hashtag United and scored his first 2 goals for Wands in the FA Cup tie vs Larkfield & New Hythe.

Darion Dowrich – Defender – Darion is a new arrival at Cray having joined the club from near neighbours Glebe and made his league debut against Hashtag United on the opening day of the season. Full back Darion joined Glebe for the 2023-24 season but also played seven games for FC Elmstead. He returned to Glebe and made seventeen SCEFL Premier appearances and played in their Playoff Semi-Final with Erith Town. Darion is a player with huge potential and we welcome him to Cray.

Charlie Edwards – Midfield – Cray Wanderers are delighted to announce the signing of midfielder Charlie Edwards to the club. Charlie joins the Wands from Potters Bar Town where he finished last season after two seasons at Canvey Island. Charlie scored his first goal for the club in the 1-0 win at Cheshunt on 26th October. Charlie started his career with Hertford Town, Harlow Town and Waltham Abbey joining Potters Bar briefly in 2021. He went on to Corinthian Casuals and then joined Canvey Island in November 2022 and went on to make 64 appearances scoring 8 goals before joining Potters Bar Town in late March 2024 playing the remaining 9 games of the season.

David Ijaha – Midfield – Cray Wanderers are delighted to announce that David Ijaha has been retained for the 2024-25 season. David had an outstanding 2023-24 season making 44 appearances either at the back or in midfield for the Wands, scoring twice and was voted Supporters Player of the Year as well as Manager's Player, and Player's Player of the Year. David joined the Wands in September 2022 and the midfielder has made 73 appearances scoring four goals including in the Isthmian Premier Playoff Semi Final at Hornchurch on 26th April 23. David also shone as a central defender at times since joining the Wands. David was a youth team player at Chelsea and Wolves where he played for the U18s before going into the non-league game with Harrow Borough in 2010. He went on to play for St. Albans City, Tonbridge Angels, Hayes & Yeading Utd and Whitehawk

CRAY WANDERERS PLAYER PROFILES

where he made 62 appearances between 2014-16 before being signed by Plymouth Argyle where he made 3 appearances during the 2016-17 season. After a short spell at Wealdstone, David returned to Whitehawk for the 2017-18 season and then on to Welling Utd, Dulwich Hamlet and Dartford at the end of the 2021-22 season and another short spell at Whitehawk.

Nathan Jeché – Striker – Nathan is a striker who joined Cray Wanderers in November 2024 after appearing on dual registration with National South Hemel Hempstead Town and SCEFL Division One side Snodland Town. Nathan made his Wands debut as substitute against Cray Valley PM on 5th November and has scored two goals against Carshalton Athletic and the winner against Chichester City on 10th December. Nathan came through the Maidstone United Academy and went on to sign with the club and made a handful of appearances in the first team while having a brief spell on loan at Fleet Town. He departed Maidstone in September 2023 to join the QPR Development squad but was released in the summer and signed for Hemel Hempstead making one appearance in the first team while at Snodland Town scored four goals in three matches including a hat-trick against Kennington in October 2024.

Toby King – Midfielder – Toby is a recent signing by the Wands in September 2024 after a spell in Icelandic football at Vestri and made his debut against Chatham Town in the Kent Senior Cup and scored his first goal for the Wands against Hastings United in the FA Cup in September. Toby came through the youth systems at West Ham United and West Bromwich Albion and signed professional with West Brom in 2020. He made one senior appearance against Arsenal in the Carabao Cup in August 2021 and whilst there spent a short loan spell at Billerica Town. In May 2022 he joined Vestri in the Icelandic 1st Division before joining Czech side Banik Ostrava in 2023 and then returned to Vestri in April 2024.

Frankie-Jay Moralee – Defender – FrankieJay joined Cray Wanderers in December on a month long loan from EFL League Two Bromley and made a great debut in a 1-0 win at Dover. Frankie-Jay is the son of former Crystal Palace, Millwall and Watford midfielder Jamie Moralee and has been part of the Bromley U18s and U21s squad. He was called up as an un-used substitute in the Ravens EFL Trophy game at Charlton Athletic.

Ike Orji Defender – Ike is a recent arrival at the Wands having joined from Chelmsford City in September 2024 and made his debut in the Kent Senior Cup win at Chatham Town. Ike came through the Maidstone United and Chatham Town academies and began his senior career with Chatham in 2019 making 71 appearances between 2019-23 and was part of their SCEFL Premier promotion winning side. He went on to join Gillingham in 2023 making two appearances and making loan appearances back at Chatham Town, Welling Utd and Hemel Hempstead Town. He went on to join Chelmsford City in the summer of 2024 before joining Cray.

Adrian Owiredun-Gyamera – Full Back – Adrian joined the Wands in August and made his debut against Lewes at Flamingo Park and has impressed in recent performances, keeping his place since. Adrian is a full back/defender of great potential who joined the Wands having played for Boldmere St. Michael last season and made 9 appearances for the Sutton Coldfield based club. Adrian was also at Oxford City and was part of their U23s set up. Whilst at Boldmere St Michael, Adrian studied at Warwick University and graduated with BSc (Hons) in Global Sustainable Development.

George Penn – Midfield – George is a midfield player signed in December on a month loan from EFL League Two Bromley. George made his debut in the excellent 1-0 win at Dover on 14th December and also played in the 1-1 draw with Billerica Town the following Saturday. George has been part of the Ravens U18s and U21s set up and made his full debut against Charlton Athletic in the EFL Trophy.

Frankie Raymond – Midfield – Cray Wanderers are delighted to announce Frankie Raymond has been retained for the 2024-25 season. Midfielder Frankie had a very consistent 2023-24 season joining the Wands from Dulwich Hamlet making 40 appearances and scored four goals and also netted on the first day of the 2024-25 season. Frankie adds considerable experience to the midfield and began his career in the Reading Academy spending loan spells at Horsham, Basingstoke Town, Eastleigh and Hungerford Town before joining Gillingham's Development side in 2012. In 2014 he moved on to Eastbourne Borough making 70 appearances over two seasons in the National South. From there he moved into the Football League and the National League with Dagenham & Redbridge for three seasons making 56 appearances. He stayed in the National League in 2017 when he signed for Bromley for whom he made 171 appearances in four seasons including reaching the FA Trophy Final in his first season and reaching the National League playoffs in 2020-21. The following season he signed for Boreham Wood and was part of the side which reached the 5th Round of the FA Cup making 42 appearances before

CRAY WANDERERS PLAYER PROFILES

joining Dulwich Hamlet at the start of last season. We welcome Frankie back with the Wands for what will be a historic season for the club in our new home.

Shaun Rowley – Goalkeeper – Cray Wanderers are delighted that Shaun Rowley has been retained for the 2024-25 season. Shaun has had a fantastic two seasons with the Wands missing just one Isthmian Premier League game and his performances in goal earned him the Supporters Player of the Year for 2022-23 and runner up last season. Shaun kept fifteen clean sheets in 2022-23 as the Wands finished in 5th place in the league and reached the playoffs for the first time and eleven last season. Shaun is just one game away from making f100 first team appearances. Shaun came through the youth system at Shrewsbury Town turning professional in 2005. Whilst with the Shrews he went out on loan to Halesowen, Chorley and Tamworth then signing for Halifax Town in 2018. From here Shaun went on to Solihull Moors and Kettering Town before joining Matlock in September 2020 spending the latter part of the 2021-22 season with Carlton Town.

Josh Shonibare – Winger/Midfield – Josh is a recent newcomer to Cray Wanderers having joined in late November after a spell training with the club. Josh came through the Greenwich Borough youth set up and joined Derby County playing for the U23s making over 50 appearances in Premier League 2 between 2021-22. Following his release from Derby County he went on to Cheshunt in November 2022 making 3 appearances in the National South before going on to Maidstone United in February 2023 making 12 appearances, scoring 4 goals. He moved onto Dulwich Hamlet in November 2023 making 22 appearances scoring 3 goals but left in August this year for a spell playing for North Cyprus side Degirmenlik.

Remi Sutton – Defender/Left-Back – Remi is a newcomer to Cray Wanderers having joined from Cheshunt in November 2024 and is an experienced defender/left back who won the FA Trophy with Hornchurch in 2020-21 and the FA Vase with Romford last season. Remi made his Wands debut against Folkestone Invicta on 9th November. Remi began his career with Basildon United before going on to Thurrock in 2013 where he played more than 100 games. After a spell at Greenwich Borough he returned to Thurrock in 2016 before going on to Enfield Town for the 2018-19 season. He departed Enfield to join Hornchurch in February 2019 where he remained until the summer of 2024 and made 112 appearances and helped the Urchins win the FA Trophy against Hereford in 2021. Last season after a spell out with injury he spent some time with Romford and helped the Boro win the FA Vase at Wembley vs Great Wakering Rovers. He moved to Cheshunt in the summer of 2024 and made 12 appearances including against Cray Wanderers on 26th October.

Quade Taylor – Defender – Cray Wanderers are delighted to announce the signing of defender Quade Taylor to the club. Quade comes to the Wands from Corinthian Casuals whom he joined from Hastings United in January 2024. Quade came through the youth systems at Dulwich Hamlet and Crystal Palace and signed for Palace in 2012 but never broke into the first team but spent a loan spell with Welling United. In 2014 he joined Bolton Wanderers where he made one first team appearance on the final day of the 2014-15 season and had a loan spell at Dagenham & Redbridge. In 2016 he joined Dulwich Hamlet where he remained until 2023 making 169 appearances and scoring 8 goals. At the start of the 2023-24 season he joined Hastings after starting the season at Carshalton Athletic before joining Corinthian Casuals.

Josh Williams – Striker – Josh is a forward who joined the Wands from Lewes in November 2024 and made his debut as substitute at Cray Valley PM on 5th November and scored twice in the 4-0 win at Potters Bar Town on 16th November has recently scored three goals in three games against Billericay Town, Dartford and Hendon. Josh started out with Chatham Town and Sevenoaks Town and excelled at Whitstable Town last season where he scored eighteen goals and also contributed eleven assists for the Oystermen. He moved on to Hampton & Richmond Borough but departed in the summer to join Lewes where he made 14 appearances scoring one goal before joining the Wands.

Neil Smith – Manager – Cray Wanderers announced on 22nd March, 2022 the appointment of Neil Smith as manager. Neil came in for the remaining six games of the season and helped to stave off relegation and from that helped build a much more successful 2022-23 season which saw Cray finish in their highest ever league position of 5th, most points and goals in an Isthmian Premier season. After a difficult start to last season Neil managed to guide the Wands away from relegation to help the club start life at Flamingo Park in the Isthmian Premier. Neil had a distinguished Football League and Non-League career as a player and coach and later as a manager. He started out in the Tottenham Hotspur youth system and was signed as an apprentice in 1990 but never got a chance to play so initially went on loan to Gillingham in 1991 and remained there for six years making over 200 appearances for the Medway club. He moved on to Fulham in 1997 for two seasons and scored against Tottenham in the FA Cup. In 1999 he moved to Reading and all three Football League clubs he gained promotion as a player. He had a short spell at Stevenage Borough and then on to Woking in 2002 for five seasons and became interim manager for a spell. He continued in player management at Welling United and after short spells as a player at Bromley and Maidstone United he called time on his playing career.

12 DAYS OF GROUNDHOPPING CHRISTMAS

SOMEHOW it is December already! Where has the time gone? To start getting us into the festive mood, Tom Salinger has penned his annual 12 days of groundhopping Christmas:

12 away supporters

11 new grounds ticked off

10 programme bundles

9 fixture changes

8 home fans moaning

7 bars card only

6 hoppers chatting

5 GOLDEN GOALS

4 flags hanging

3 games unbeaten

2 pints a tenner

And an error on the team sheet

By Tom Salinger

1) 1961 2) 1966 3) 1968 4) 1971 5) 1974
6) 1980 7) 1980 8) 1995 9) 2005 10) 2023
11) Long Haired Lover from Liverpool 12)
When a Child is Born 13) Another Brick in
the Wall Pt 2 14) Reet Petite 15) Savours
Day 16) Too Much 17) Bob the Builder 18)
Something Stupid 19) A Moment Like
This 20) When You Believe

Quiz answers

PITCHING IN

proudly supports

THE TRIDENT TRUST FUND

Providing access
to grants and funding
for your club,
in your community

@PitchingIn_





Manager: Ahmet Rifat

Coaches: Ruben Gaspar, Jonny Georgiou, Ricky Machel

Goalkeeping Coach: Gavin King

Analyst: Michael Smith

Kit Manager: Pete Barker

Toby Byron
Billy Cracknell
Jaiden Drakes-Thomes
Ben Frempah
Rhamar Garrett-Douglas
Brian Garzon
Andronicos Georgiou
Fergal Hale-Brown
Loic Hernandez
Arthur Iontton
Ryan Lowe
Zack Newton
Tommy Roberts
Ogo Obi
Ferdinand Oko
Camilo Restrepo
Ayo Tanimowo
Ben Ward-Cochrane
Bobby Webb



Manager: Neil Smith

Assistant manager: Tim o'Shea

Coach: Ugo Udoji

Goalkeeping Coach: Alfie George

Physio: Ally Maloney

Kit Manager: Paddy Gray

Lateef Adaja
Tom Bonner
Tom Borders
Nyren Clunis
Kenny Coker
Darion Dowrich
Charlie Edwards
Frankie-Jay Gyamera
Afriye Simon Offei Gymera
Michael Ihiedi
Nathan Jeshe
Toby King
Ike Orji
Adrian Owiredu-Gyamera
Bobby Parkes
George Penn
Frankie Raymond
Shaun Rowley (GK)
Josh Shonibare
Remi Sutton
Quade Taylor
Freddie Warwick
Joshua Williams

MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: Lawrence Torz-Brown

Assistants: Daryl Ann & Nigel Freelove