

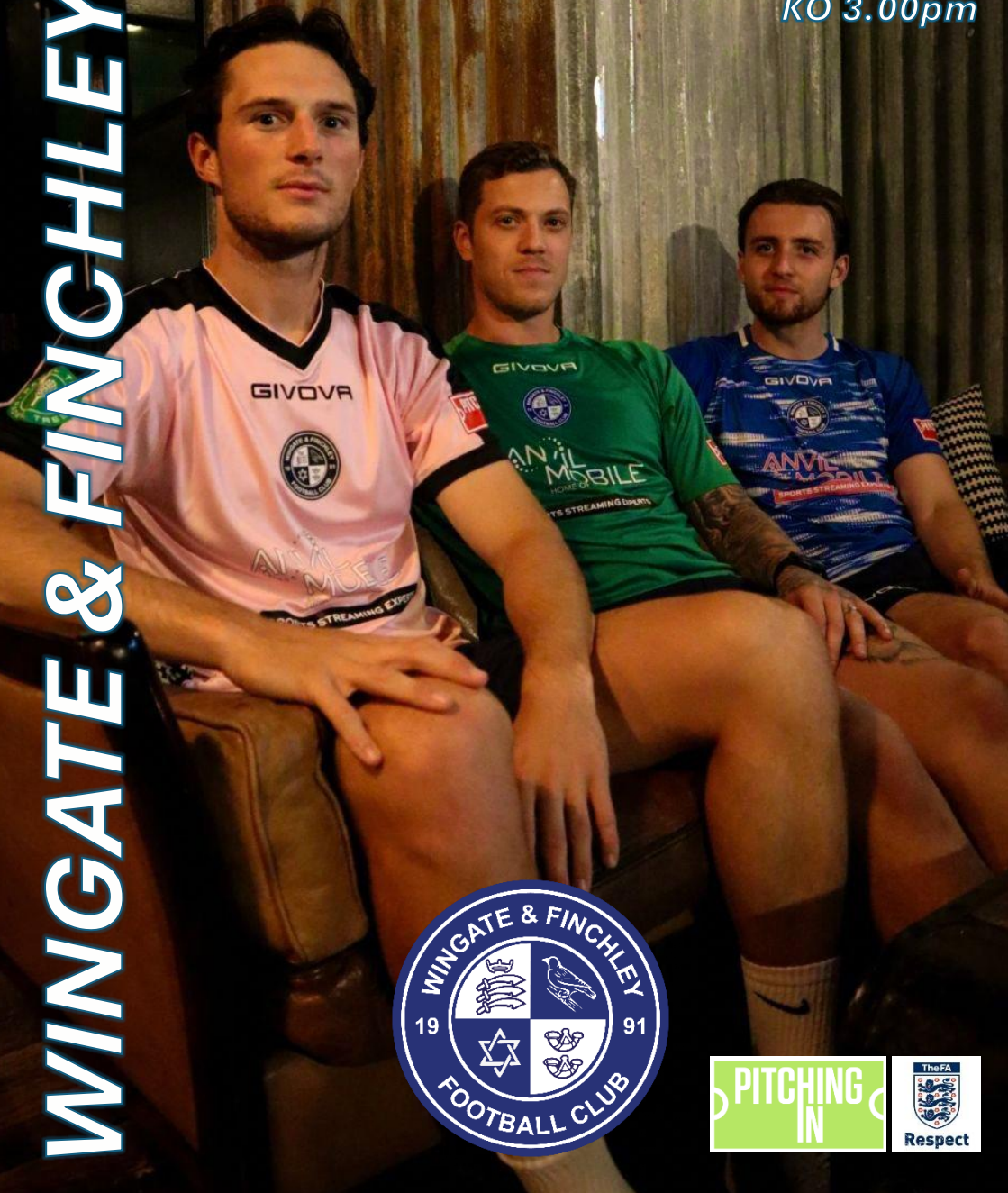
WINGATE & FINCHLEY FC

ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION

Saturday 23rd August 2025

vs Whitehawk FC

KO 3.00pm



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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 Whitehawk enjoy their stay in N12 this afternoon!

Whilst the Blues have had an unlucky start to the season with three single-goal defeats, Whitehawk have a 1-1-1 record.

A 3-2 defeat at Ramsgate was followed by a goalless draw with Chichester and then a 3-2 win over Cray Valley.

We have three cup draws to inform you about:

FA Cup: away at Carshalton Athletic on Saturday 30th August

London Senior Cup: Away at Met Police on Tuesday 7th October

FA Youth Cup: U18's home vs Concord Rangers on Weds 3rd September

We hope you enjoy the match today!

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:

£14 adults, £9 concession,
£5 for ages 10-16, under 10 free

**Advance purchase discounts are available online*

Chairman & Owner: 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 Physio: Israel Ozangbo

Kit Manager: Peter Barker

Head Groundsman: Andy Ward

Welfare Officer: Jonny Georgiou

Bar Manager: Lorraine Coleman

Matchday Hospitality: Tony Ward

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 – by Peter Brown

This season's Views From Afar, begin with three very loosely connected statements, two of which are true and one made up; but which one? Answer at the end of the article.

- Whitehawk's one time manager Darren Freeman, had a book published in 2021 entitled 'The Last Blood Lord'
- The last Australian to play in an FA Cup Final was Mile Jedinak
- The team that came last in Division 2 of the Football League last season was Morecambe

Last – that word again - season, there were a plethora of Sussex teams in our division, but thanks to both promotion and relegation, the number is smaller this year; today's visitors from Whitehawk are one of just four from the county where the Lady Wife and I now reside. This would have been three, had Burgess Hill not pulled off a somewhat surprising victory in the play-offs at the ground of long-term title contenders, Sittingbourne.

This obviously places those of us living in the land of the South Saxons but following the fortunes of the mighty Wingate and Finchley, at something of a disadvantage. There are only four grounds from which we might reasonably expect to return home and be sitting in an armchair sipping the first sherry of the evening, before those on the team coach can even begin to dream of the M25. Of these, newly promoted Hill are by far the closest to home, so the bottle may be uncorked before the players are even out of the shower.

Which brings us to Whitehawk. The chips are legendary, but so is the car park. I referred in last season's article that I once found myself ankle deep in a puddle when stepping out of the car, which I had squeezed into the last available space. It was only later that I realised that a drive of a few more metres would have taken me to the far side of the ground, from which the steep slope of the South Downs rises, and which provides not only ample parking, but also well-drained ground, the water from the hillside flowing speedily downwards and on to the football pitch itself. Which may or may not be a good thing. Good for the cars, obviously.

The land behind continues to rise, which gives people out for an afternoon dog walk or making an assault on the South Downs Way, the opportunity of gazing down upon the match – certainly once a week. I have rarely, on my visits, seen a vast crowd gathered there, but perhaps when Whitehawk reach the latter stages of the FA Cup and tickets are at a premium, it will prove to be

A VIEW FROM AFAR

a good vantage point. The club might even negotiate with the National Park authorities and erect a massive stand on the hillside, which would look something like the 'Party Stand' at Old Trafford cricket ground, only about ten times as high. Obviously, opera glasses would have to be provided at the lower seats, military standard binoculars further back and high powered telescopes for those right at the back. And, of course, crampons and oxygen masks.

I once went to Wycombe Wanderers, where a similar hill exists and there, people did congregate to watch the match; it seemed strange as there was plenty of room in the ground and you could only see the goal at one end. Better by far to pay the entrance fee and enjoy the game in front of you.

Which statement is untrue?

Darren Freeman did write the book, but not that Darren Freeman! Jedinak was of course Crystal palace captain last season and Morecambe, were indeed bottom and were relegated, now sadly struggling for survival.

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 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.

2024/25 saw a new revamped side, and a manager and coaching squad with that extra year's experience and they completed a successfully stable mid-table finish.

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TODAY'S VISITORS - CLUB HISTORY

Whitehawk are Brighton's premier non-league club. Founded in 1945, the Hawks have had two periods of unprecedented success as they have risen up the football pyramid from a team playing parks football to be within one game of an FA Cup third round tie at Everton in 2015. Between 1948 and 1952 the Hawks were promoted 4 times to reach senior county level where they remained until 2010, when three further promotions in four seasons took them to just two leagues below the Football League.

The club was founded in 1945 as Whitehawk & Manor Farm Old Boys FC and entered the Brighton Junior Cup league. The club's first match was a 5-3 away win on 13 October 1945 against Hove County Old Boys at Hove Recreation Ground. Whitehawk & MFOB then joined the Brighton, Hove & District Football League, winning four titles and their first major senior trophy, the Sussex Senior Cup by beating Eastbourne Town 1-0 at Woodside Road, Worthing in 1951. The Sussex Senior Cup win completed an unprecedented series of cup wins at junior, intermediate and senior levels in successive seasons, which still stands as a record in non-league football. Just how far the club had come in such a short time was illustrated by the fact that the reserves won the Sussex Junior Cup in 1952, beating Selsey 3-1, so securing a trophy at the same level that the first team had been playing at, just four years earlier.

Sussex County League 1952-2010

The club was admitted to the Sussex County League Division 1 in 1952-53 and finished third in their first season. The Hawks' first county league game was a 4-1 win at Crawley on 31 August 1952. The Hawks were Division 1 runners-up for three successive seasons from 1954-55 onwards, as well as Sussex Senior Cup finalists in 1954, losing 1-0 to Horsham at the Goldstone Ground in front of a crowd of 5626. For the 1954-55 season, Brighton Corporation allowed the club to move onto a permanently enclosed pitch at the north end of East Brighton Park, on what is now the home pitch, known as the Enclosed Ground. The first match played there was a Sussex County League Division 1 game against Southwick on 1 September 1954, which the Hawks won 6-2.

The Hawks won the Sussex RUR Cup for the first time in 1955, beating Eastbourne United 1-0 after extra time at the Goldstone. The club were never out of the top five in

TODAY'S VISITORS - CLUB HISTORY

the County League Division 1 for the rest of the decade and changed their name to Whitehawk FC for the start of the 1958–59 season.

In 1961–62 under manager Billy Thew, Whitehawk won the first of four County League One titles as well as the Sussex Senior Cup, beating Eastbourne United 4–0 at the Goldstone. Billy Ford scored 16 goals in Sussex Senior Cup football that season out of a personal haul of 93 for the season. The publicity generated by a civic reception at the Royal Pavilion led to Brighton Corporation providing a grant of £3,500 for the club to erect a self-build grandstand with standing for 500 spectators. In 1963–64 the Hawks retained the championship by winning their last six matches of the season. After losing the nucleus of the squad to Lewes the team then struggled and under manager Ron Pavey, who later became the Chief Executive of Brighton & Hove Albion, found itself relegated for the first time ever in 1967. They made an immediate return as Division Two champions in 1968.

The next nine years saw The Hawks continue to compete in the top division, during which time they lost 2-1 to Horsham at the Goldstone in the Sussex Senior Cup final in 1972. The Hawks were relegated for a second time in 1977. This time they were to spend four seasons in Division Two, having to apply for re-election in 1979 after finishing second from bottom, their lowest ever senior league placing.

The club gained its first club house in September 1980, using what was originally a prefabricated building that had been a temporary bank in Haywards Heath. A perimeter fence was added to the ground in 1981 and under new manager Sammy Donnelly, the Hawks won promotion from Division 2 as champions. In 1983–84 Whitehawk won County League One for the third time, winning their last 18 games of the season.

1986–87 saw the Hawks finish as runners-up to Arundel. In 1988–89, again under Sammy Donnelly, Whitehawk had what was at the time their best run in the FA Cup, going out 2-0 in a fourth qualifying round replay to Bognor Regis Town. The home attendance record of 2,100 at the Enclosed Ground stood for 27 years. Floodlights were erected in 1988 and were first used in a match organised to mark the occasion against then First Division Luton Town on 21 March 1988. The game finished 2-2.

TODAY'S VISITORS - CLUB HISTORY

The Hawks won the Sussex RUR Cup for the third time in 1990–91, beating Peacehaven & Telscombe in the final 2–1, with youth player Darren Freeman, our future most successful ever manager, heading the winner. 1993–94 was another good season for the club, finishing once again as runners-up, this time to Wick. 2002–03 saw the club under manager and former youth player Ian Chapman once again finish in second place, this time to runaway winners Burgess Hill Town.

The club finally achieved the league title success that had previously eluded them, winning County League 1 in 2009–10 under Darren Freeman, to gain promotion to the Isthmian League Division One South for the first time. The Hawks also reached the semi-final of the FA Vase, losing 4-1 on aggregate to Wroxham of the Eastern Counties League Premier Division.

Isthmian League 2010-2014

In their first season at the new level Whitehawk were in the title race but eventually had to settle for third place and an end-of-season play-off defeat on penalties to Leatherhead. The Hawks finished as Isthmian League Division One South champions the following season, as well as lifting the Sussex Senior Cup after beating Crawley Down 2–1 at the Amex. The club achieved back to back promotions in the 2012–13 season by winning the Isthmian League Premier Division at the first attempt to earn a place in the Conference South.

National League South 2014-2018

The Hawks struggled in their first season in Conference South. After achieving three promotions in four years, Darren Freeman was sacked in January 2014 and replaced by Steve King. The club then enjoyed their most successful season ever in 2014–15, finishing fourth in Conference South and earning a place in the play-off final against Boreham Wood, which was lost 2-1 after extra time. Whitehawk completed the season with a 5–0 victory over Lewes at the Amex to lift the Sussex Senior Cup.

In 2015–16 the Hawks reached the first-round of the FA Cup for the first time winning 5–3 against National League Lincoln City. Lincoln's next FA Cup defeat the following season

TODAY'S VISITORS - CLUB HISTORY

came in the sixth round at the Emirates Stadium against Arsenal. In the second round the Hawks drew 1-1 at League Two Dagenham & Redbridge, following a dramatic headed goal in added time by Jordan Rose, which was broadcast live by the BBC during the afternoon sports programme. In front of a record crowd of 2,174 at the Enclosed Ground, the Hawks lost the second-round replay 3-2 after taking the lead through Danny Mills. To force the match into extra time, Whitehawk again equalised dramatically in added time. The whole match was broadcast live by BT Sport. In February 2016, the club parted company with King after picking up just 9 points from the previous 36 available. Under Argentine Pablo Asensio, the Hawks finished the season in style, but lost in the promotion play offs to Ebbsfleet United.

The next two seasons saw frequent managerial changes and over 100 different players used, culminating in the inevitable relegation for only the third time in the club's history in 2017-18. Not even the return of Steve King could arrest the club's fortunes and when he departed at the end of the season, he was replaced by the Hawks successful U18 manager Jude Macdonald. Unfortunately, the Hawks suffered successive relegations to return to step 4 and the Isthmian South-East Division.

A new management team led by ex-Haywards Heath Town boss Shaun Saunders was appointed in April 2022 and led the Hawks to promotion and a respectable 9th place back in the Isthmian Premier League. Shaun resigned in the close season for personal reasons but returned to the hot seat in December 2024 with the Hawks at the bottom of the league table, working his magic to comfortably save the Hawks' Isthmian Premier status.



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Kit Manager: Pete Barker

Managers: Shaun Saunders

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Sam Cornish

Billy Cracknell

Ada Okorogheye

Charlie Grainger

Loic Hernandez

Kyron Horsley-McKay

Ore Bello

Adam Lovatt

Ryan Lowe

Johnny Allotey

Cain Keller

Camilo Restrepo

Mackye Townsend-West

Ben Watt

Bailey Vose

Josh Shattell

Oscar Borg

Nathan Cooper

Jack Meeres

Hugo Odogwu-Atkinson

Zuriel Otseh-Taiwo

Stefan Wright

Gideon Acheampong

Andrew Briggs

Joel Daly

Charlie Harris

Iffy Allen

Harry Bridle

Alfie Rogers

Charlie Lambert

Josh Nandhra

Rob O'Toole

Rio Quaye

Charlie Walker

MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee: Joshua Evans

Assistants: Christopher Parperi, Patrick Hanlon