

= Bristol Rovers F.C. =

Bristol Rovers Football Club is a professional association football club based in the city of Bristol , England . They compete in League One , the third tier of English football . The team plays their home matches at Memorial Stadium , in Horfield , a suburb of Bristol , and is affiliated to the Gloucestershire County FA .

The club was founded in 1883 as Black Arabs F.C. , and were also known as Eastville Rovers and Bristol Eastville Rovers before finally changing its name to Bristol Rovers in 1899 . The club 's official nickname is The Pirates , reflecting the maritime history of Bristol . The local nickname of the club is The Gas , from the gasworks next to their former home Eastville Stadium , which started as a derogatory term used by fans of their main rival Bristol City but was affectionately adopted by the team . According to a survey conducted in December 2003 , Cardiff City and Swindon Town are considered their second and third biggest rivals .

Rovers were admitted to the Football League in 1920 and have played there ever since , apart from spending the 2014 ? 15 season in the Conference Premier . They previously came close to losing their league status in 1939 , when they were re @-@ elected after finishing bottom of Division Three ( South ) , and in 2002 when the team finished one league position away from relegation to the Football Conference . Their highest finishing positions were in 1956 and 1959 , on both occasions ending the season in 6th place in Division Two , then the second tier of English football . Rovers were Football League Trophy finalists in 1990 and 2007 .

= = History = =

= = = Early years = = =

The club was formed following a meeting at the Eastville Restaurant in Bristol in September 1883 . It was initially called Black Arabs F.C. , after the Arabs rugby team and the predominantly black kits in which they played . This name only lasted for the 1883 ? 84 season , and in a bid to draw more fans from the local area the club was renamed Eastville Rovers in 1884 .

The club played only friendly games until the 1887 ? 88 season , when it took part in the Gloucestershire Cup for the first time . In 1892 the club became a founder member of the Bristol and District League , which three years later was renamed the Western League . In 1897 Eastville Rovers joined the Birmingham and District League , and for two seasons played in both this league and the Western League . At the beginning of the 1897 ? 98 season , the club turned professional and changed its name to Bristol Eastville Rovers , and on 17 February 1899 the name was officially changed to Bristol Rovers . In 1899 Bristol Rovers joined the newly formed Southern League , where they remained until 1920 , winning the league title along the way in 1905 .

= = = Into the Football League = = =

For the 1920 ? 21 season , the Southern League teams were moved into the new Division Three of the Football League , which became Division Three ( South ) the following season . They remained in this division for over 30 years , before winning the league , and promotion in the 1952 ? 53 season .

The team has won promotion on four other occasions : in 1973 ? 74 from the Third Division to the Second Division , again in 1989 ? 90 as Division Three champions , in 2006 ? 07 to the Football League One , and then in 2014 ? 15 to League Two from the Conference Premier . The club has been relegated six times ? in 1961 ? 62 , 1980 ? 81 , 1992 ? 93 , 2000 ? 01 , 2010 ? 11 and most recently at the end of the 2013 ? 14 season .

The highest position in the football ladder achieved by Rovers at the end of season is sixth place in the second tier , which they did twice ; once in 1955 ? 56 , and again in 1958 ? 59 . The closest they came to the top flight was in 1955 ? 56 , when they ended the season just four points below the

promotion positions . The lowest league position achieved by the club is twenty @-@ third out of twenty @-@ four teams in the fourth tier , which has occurred twice . In the 2001 ? 02 season , relegation from the Football League was narrowly avoided on two counts ; firstly they ended just one league position above the relegation zone , and secondly the rules were changed the following season to increase the number of relegation places to two , meaning that if Rovers had finished in that position one year later they would have been relegated . This position was matched at the end of the 2013 ? 14 season , which this time saw Rovers relegated to the Conference for the first time . They returned to the league at the end of their first Conference season , with a penalty shootout victory over Grimsby Town in the play @-@ off final .

= = = Cup competitions = = =

The only major cup competition won by Bristol Rovers is the 1972 Watney Cup , when they beat Sheffield United in the final . The club also won the Division Three ( South ) Cup in 1934 ? 35 , as well as winning or sharing the Gloucestershire Cup on 32 occasions . The team has never played in European competition ; the closest Rovers came was when they missed out on reaching the international stage of the Anglo @-@ Italian Cup in the 1992 ? 93 season on a coin toss held over the phone with West Ham United .

In the FA Cup , Rovers have reached the quarter @-@ final stage on three occasions . The first time was in 1950 ? 51 when they faced Newcastle United at St James ' Park in front of a crowd of 62 @, @ 787 , the record for the highest attendance at any Bristol Rovers match . The second time they reached the quarter final was in 1957 ? 58 , when they lost to Fulham , and the most recent appearance at this stage of the competition was during the 2007 ? 08 season , when they faced West Bromwich Albion . They were the first Division Three team to win an FA Cup tie away to a Premier League side , when in 2002 they beat Derby County 3 ? 1 at Pride Park Stadium .

They have twice reached the final of the Football League Trophy , in 1989 ? 90 and 2006 ? 07 , but finished runners @-@ up on both occasions . On the second occasion they did not allow a single goal against them in the competition en route to the final , but conceded the lead less than a minute after the final kicked off .

= = Rivalries = =

Bristol Rovers main rivals are city neighbours Bristol City , with whom they contest the Bristol derby . This rivalry was deemed 8th fiercest rivalry in English football in an in @-@ depth report by the Football Pools in 2008 . The most recent encounter between the clubs took place on 4 September 2013 , which saw Rovers beaten by City in a Football League Trophy tie at Ashton Gate Stadium by a 2 ? 1 scoreline . Other rivals are mainly other teams from the West Country , such as Swindon Town , Plymouth Argyle , Exeter City and Yeovil Town . Since relegation to the Conference , a rivalry has also emerged with Forest Green Rovers .

In the past , rivalries also emerged with Severnside rivals Cardiff City known as the Severnside derby . Rovers most recent meeting against Cardiff was a League Cup match on 26 August 2009 , which Cardiff went on to win 3 ? 1 . This game took place at the new Cardiff City Stadium and the Rovers only goal from the game came from Steve Elliot . The last time Cardiff and Bristol Rovers were in the same league was in the 1999 ? 2000 season .

Bristol Rovers and Plymouth Argyle have played each other 92 times in the Football League and in national cup competitions , with the better record belonging to The Pilgrims due to their 36 wins compared with Rovers ' 30 . The most recent encounter with Plymouth Argyle occurred on 1 January 2013 , which Rovers won 2 ? 1 . Rovers were 2 ? 0 up at half @-@ time , the defeat for Plymouth against Rovers resulted in Plymouth sacking their manager Carl Fletcher and saw John Ward register his first win of his second spell as Rovers manager .

The first time Rovers encountered Yeovil was a Football League Trophy match which was played on 31 October 2001 , which Rovers won via a penalty shoot out . The most recent encounter between the teams was in a Football League Two match on 15 August 2015 , which Rovers won 1 ?

0 with Ellis Harrison scoring a late winner . Because of the close proximity many players have also represented both the clubs , for example Adam Virgo , Gavin Williams , Dominic Blizzard and Tom Parkes .

= = Colours and badge = =

Bristol Rovers are known for their distinctive blue and white quartered shirts , which they have worn for most of their history . The current home kit consists of a light blue and white quartered shirt and white shorts , while the away kit is black and gold with the same colours as the trim . During the 2008 ? 09 season a special third strip , which is black with a gold sash , and is a reproduction of the original Black Arab shirt , was used for a single match to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the club .

The team began playing in black shirts with a yellow sash from their foundation in 1883 as Black Arabs F.C. until 1885 , by which time they were called Eastville Rovers . For the next fourteen years , until 1899 , the team wore blue and white hooped shirts . These were replaced by black and white striped shirts until 1919 .

When Rovers were admitted to The Football League in 1920 they wore white shirts with blue shorts . These remained the team colours until 1930 , when the colours were reversed to blue shirts and white shorts for one season . The blue and white quarters were first worn in 1931 , when they were introduced to try to make the players look larger and more intimidating . Rovers continued to wear the quarters for 31 years until they were replaced by blue pinstripes on a white background .

Over the next ten years , Rovers went on to wear blue and white stripes , all blue , and blue shirts with white shorts before returning to the blue and white quarters in 1973 , which have remained the colours ever since . During the 1996 ? 97 season , Rovers wore an unpopular striped quartered design , prompting fans to refer to it as the Tesco bag shirts because of their similarity to the design used for the company 's carrier bags . The change in design prompted the Trumpton Times fanzine to change its name to Wot , No Quarters ?

The black and gold shirts were also used as the away kit for the 2002 ? 03 season , the club 's 120th anniversary .

In 2005 , Rovers ran an April Fools ' joke on their official website , stating that the team 's new away strip would be all pink . Although this was intended to be a joke , a number of fans petitioned the club to get the kit made for real , and also suggested that funds raised through the sale of the pink shirts should be donated to a breast cancer charity . Although the pink shirts were never used in a competitive fixture , they were worn for a pre @-@ season friendly against Plymouth Argyle in 2006 .

A pirate features on both the club badge and the badge of the supporters club , reflecting the club nickname of The Pirates . Previous club badges have featured a blue and white quartered design , based on the quartered design of the team 's jerseys .

= = Kit suppliers and sponsors = = =

Rovers first used an official kit supplier in 1977 , and the club 's first official kit sponsor followed in 1981 . Rovers ' longest running kit supplier is Errea who supplied the club kits for eleven years ( 2005 ? 16 ) . The club 's longest running kit sponsorship was from local company Cowlin Construction who sponsored the club for a total of 11 years before ending the deal in 2009 .

The Cowlin deal came to an end during the late @-@ 2000s recession . Faced with the prospect of having no shirt sponsor for the 2009 ? 10 season , the club came up with the idea of a raffle to raise the funds required . Tickets were sold at £ 1 @,@ 000 with all 96 available being sold meaning the club raised £ 96 @,@ 000 for one season of shirt sponsorship , more than some Premier League clubs . First prize in the draw went to local training and recruitment company N @-@ Gaged whose logo appeared on that season 's home kit . Second prize went to Bristol @-@ based solicitors Stevens , Hewlett & Perkins whose logo appeared on the away kit . The raffle proved so successful that the club replicated it for the 2010 ? 11 season with Smart Computers becoming the new home

kit sponsors and Stalbridge Linen the away sponsors . Despite initially planning to return to the tradition form of sponsorship , the club again ran a sponsorship raffle for the 2011 ? 12 season and continues to this day , however , with the plans to move to UWE Stadium , Rovers hope to attract a major sponsor once again in the future .

= = Stadium = =

= = = Grounds = = =

Purdown ? 1883 ? 1884

Three Acres ? 1884 ? 1891

Schoolmasters Cricket Ground ? 1891 ? 1892

Durdham Down ? 1892 ? 1894

Ridgeway ? 1894 ? 1897

Eastville Stadium ? 1897 ? 1986

Twerton Park ? 1986 ? 1996

The Memorial Stadium ? 1996 ? Present

= = = History = = =

Rovers play their home games at The Memorial Stadium in Horfield , a ground they formerly shared with Bristol Rugby Club . The team moved to The Mem , as it is known informally , at the beginning of the 1996 ? 97 season , initially as tenants but purchased it two years later .

When Bristol Rovers were known as Black Arabs F.C. in 1883 , they played their home games at Purdown , Stapleton . The following year they moved to Three Acres , the precise location of which is not known , but is believed to have been in the Ashley Down area of Bristol , where they remained for seven years . This was followed by brief stays at the Schoolmasters Cricket Ground , Durdham Down and Ridgeway .

For the majority of their history , Bristol Rovers have played their home games at the Eastville Stadium , where they remained for a period of 89 years from 1897 ? 1986 . Financial problems led to the team being forced to leave Eastville , and they found a temporary home at Twerton Park , the home of Bath City . They stayed in Bath for 10 seasons , before returning to Bristol in 1996 .

Rovers also played five home games at Ashton Gate Stadium , home of rivals Bristol City , following a fire which destroyed the South Stand of the Eastville Stadium on the night of the 16 ? 17 August 1980 . Rovers returned to Eastville in October 1980 . During World War II , some friendly matches were played in Kingswood , and in their early history some games were played at Parson Street , Bedminster

In January 2007 planning permission was granted for a new 18 @, @ 500 capacity all @-@ seater stadium to be built on the site of the Memorial Stadium . Building work was originally intended to begin late in 2007 , but a number of delays set the project back first until the summer of 2008 , and then until the summer of 2009 .

Further delays meant that by 2011 , the club had begun exploring different options with regards to the future of the club 's stadium . In June 2011 , the club announced its intention to relocate the club to a new 21 @, @ 700 all seater stadium , to be built on land at the University of the West of England 's Frenchay campus . To fund the project , the current site of the Memorial Stadium will be sold to supermarket Sainsbury 's .

In September 2012 , planning permission for the proposed UWE Stadium was granted by South Gloucestershire Council . In January 2013 , subsequent planning permission was granted by Bristol City Council for the building of a Sainsbury 's supermarket on the site of the Memorial Stadium . Disputes by a local protest group delayed the project and was followed by Sainsbury 's attempting to withdraw support for the project . Rovers therefore submitted a writ against Sainsbury 's , the hearing for which will be heard in May 2015 .

In February 2016 it was announced that a 92 % stake in the club had been bought by the Jordanian Al @-@ Qadi family and that Wael Al @-@ Qadi , a member of the Jordan Football Association , would become the president .

The club is now owned by Dwane Sports Ltd with 92 @.@ 6 % of the shares with Bristol Rovers Supporters Club owning the remaining 7 @.@ 4 % .

= = Supporter culture = =

The team traditionally draws the majority of its support from north and east Bristol and South Gloucestershire . Many towns and villages in the surrounding area are also home to significant pockets of Rovers supporters .

The nickname given to Bristol Rovers supporters is " Gasheads " . " The Gas " was originally coined as a derogatory term by the supporters of Bristol Rovers ' rivals Bristol City , and was in reference to the large gas works adjacent to the old Bristol Rovers stadium , in Eastville , Bristol which wafted the sometimes overpowering odour of town gas across the crowd . " Gasheads " was adopted as a name by a splinter group of Rovers supporters in the mid @-@ 1980s to early 1990s . The chant " Proud to be a Gashead " spread to regular fans , and a fanzine was produced called The Gashead .

The term " Gasheads " is now universally accepted within the English media and football fraternity as referring to Bristol Rovers supporters . After the club 's relegation to Football League Two in 2001 , the club designated the squad number 12 to the Gasheads to signify them as the club 's 12th Man in recognition of their loyal support .

The retired Conservative MP for Hayes and Harlington Terry Dicks is a Bristol Rovers fan . He mentioned the club in parliament on 5 May 1994 when debating with Labour MP and Chelsea fan Tony Banks . Another notable fan is Mercury Prize winning DJ Roni Size .

One Bristol Rovers print fanzine is currently active and is entitled Last Saturday Night . There is also a fan @-@ run podcast and blog called GasCast .

= = = Club song = = =

The song which is synonymous with Rovers is " Goodnight , Irene " , which was written by Lead Belly .

Opinions differ as to how this came about but it is thought to have become popular in the 1950s when a version of the song was in the British charts ? the line " sometimes I have a great notion to jump in the river and drown " ? seemed to be particularly apt when Rovers lost as the Bristol Frome flows alongside the old Eastville ground . Another theory is that it was sung at a fireworks display at the Stadium the night before a Home game against Plymouth Argyle in the 1950s . During the game the following day , Rovers were winning quite comfortably and the few Argyle supporters present began to leave early prompting a chorus of " Goodnight Argyle " from the Rovers supporters ? the tune stuck and Irene became the club song .

Another popular Bristol Rovers song is " Tote End Boys " , which was written and sung by Ben Gunstone . The name " Tote End Boys " derives from the section of Gasheads who stood in the Tote End terrace at Rovers ' old home , Eastville Stadium .

The Rovers fans have good relations with Spanish club CE Sabadell FC , which initially began due to several Rovers fans noticing that the club had the same colours . Plans are being made for a pre @-@ season friendly between the two clubs in July 2016 .

= = Players = =

= = = Current squad = = =

As of 8 May 2016

Where a player has not declared an international allegiance , nation is determined by place of birth .

The shirt number 12 is used by Gasheads to represent the fans as the 12th Man .  
For recent transfers , see 2015 ? 16 Bristol Rovers F.C. season .

== = Notable former players == =

This is a list of the most noted former players at Bristol Rovers Football Club , stating the period that each player spent at the club , their nationality and their reason for being listed . To be included in this list a player must have made over 400 league appearances for the club , scored over 100 league goals or hold a club record .

Note : all details from Byrne & Jay ( 2003 ) unless otherwise stated .

== = Club staff == =

The current manager of Bristol Rovers is Darrell Clarke . He joined Rovers in June 2013 as Assistant Manager and then took control of the first team nine months later on 29 March 2014 ( with 8 games of the season remaining ) when the previous manager John Ward changed roles to become ' Director of Football ' at the club .

== = Managerial history == =

As of March 2014 , 32 men have been appointed as a manager of Bristol Rovers Football Club , excluding caretaker managers . Bobby Gould , Gerry Francis and John Ward are the only men to have been given the job on a permanent basis twice , although Garry Thompson had a separate spell as caretaker manager before later being appointed permanently , and Phil Bate was caretaker manager on two separate occasions .

== = Youth Academy == =

The Bristol Rovers Academy currently operates at The City Academy Bristol and Sir Bernard Lovell School with matches being played at The Hallen Centre and Golden Hill . Current first @-@ team squad members Ryan Broom , Ollie Clarke , Ellis Harrison , Tyler Lytle , Tom Lockyer , Jay Malpas and Kieran Preston all graduated from the Academy to earn a professional contract . Chris Lines also graduated from the academy before moving on to Sheffield Wednesday . Lines has recently returned to Rovers . Perhaps the most successful former member of the academy is Scott Sinclair , who was signed by Chelsea in 2005 for an initial fee of £ 200 @,@ 000 , with further payments to the club possible , depending on performance . He currently plays for Premier League club Aston Villa . Other recent Academy players to have appeared in the Premier League or Football League include Tyrone Mings , Eliot Richards , Sean Rigg and Alefe Santos .

== = Women 's team == =

The club had a successful women 's team , formed in 1998 as Bristol Rovers W.F.C. following a merger with Cable @-@ Tel L.F.C .. This merger came about as Bristol Rovers only had girls teams up to the under 16 age group level , so when girls reached the age of 16 they were forced to leave the club . The merger with Cable @-@ Tel meant that Bristol Rovers had a senior squad . The club 's name was changed to Bristol Academy W.F.C. in 2005 to reflect the increased investment from the Bristol Academy of Sport . Though sometimes still referred to by their former nickname , the Gas Girls , Bristol Academy W.F.C. are no longer affiliated to Bristol Rovers .

== = Honours == =

Bristol Rovers Football Club has won the following honours :

Southern Football League Division One : 1

1904 ? 05

Football League Third Division South : 1

1952 ? 53

Football League Third Division : 1

1989 ? 90

Football League Two play @-@ offs : 1

2007

Conference Premier play @-@ offs : 1

2015

Football League Trophy , Runners @-@ up : 2

1989 ? 90 , 2006 ? 07

Football League Third Division South Cup : 1

1934 ? 35

Watney Cup : 1

1972

Gloucestershire Cup : 32

1888 ? 89 , 1902 ? 03 , 1904 ? 05 , 1913 ? 14 , 1924 ? 25 , 1927 ? 28 , 1934 ? 35 , 1935 ? 36 ,  
1937 ? 38 , 1947 ? 48 , 1948 ? 49 , 1950 ? 51 , 1953 ? 54 , 1954 ? 55 , 1955 ? 56 , 1958 ? 59 ,  
1962 ? 63 , 1963 ? 64 , 1964 ? 65 , 1965 ? 66 , 1967 ? 68 , 1973 ? 74 , 1974 ? 75 , 1981 ? 82 ,  
1982 ? 83 , 1983 ? 84 , 1984 ? 85 , 1988 ? 89 , 1989 ? 90 , 1992 ? 93 , 1993 ? 94 , 1994 ? 95

= = Records = =

= = = Scorelines = = =

Biggest League Win : 7 ? 0 ( v Brighton & Hove Albion , Division Three ( South ) , 29 November 1952 )

7 ? 0 ( v Swansea City , Division Two , 2 October 1954 )

7 ? 0 ( v Shrewsbury Town , Division Three , 21 March 1964 )

7 ? 0 ( v Alfreton Town , Conference Premier , 25 April 2015 )

Biggest Cup Win :

Competition proper : 6 ? 0 ( v Merthyr Tydfil , FA Cup Round 1 , 14 November 1987 )

Qualifying : 15 ? 1 ( v Weymouth , FA Cup Third Qualifying Round , 17 November 1900 )

Biggest League Defeat : 0 ? 12 ( v Luton Town , Division Three South , 13 April 1936 )

= = = Players = = =

Most League Appearances : 546 ? Stuart Taylor , 1966 ? 1980

Most Goals for club : 242 ? Geoff Bradford , 1949 ? 1964

Most Goals in a season : 33 ? Geoff Bradford , 1952 ? 53

Highest Transfer Fee Paid : £ 375 @,@ 000 ? Andy Tillson from Queens Park Rangers , November 1992

Highest Transfer Fee Received : £ 2 @,@ 600 @,@ 000 ? Barry Hayles to Fulham , November 1998

= = = Other = = =

Record Home Attendance : 38 @,@ 472 ( v Preston North End , FA Cup , 30 January 1960