

= Aston Villa F.C. =

Aston Villa Football Club ( / ?æst?n ?v?l? / ; nicknamed Villa , The Villa , The Villans , The Lions ) is a professional association football club based in Aston , Birmingham , that plays in the Championship , the second level of English football . Founded in 1874 , they have played at their current home ground , Villa Park , since 1897 . Aston Villa were the originators and founding members of the Football League in 1888 . They were also founding members of the Premier League in 1992 . In June 2016 , the club was sold by American businessman Randy Lerner to Recon Group , owned by Chinese businessman Dr Tony Jiantong Xia .

Aston Villa are one of the oldest and most successful football clubs in the history of English football . Villa won the 1981 ? 82 European Cup , and are thus one of five English clubs to win what is now the UEFA Champions League . They have the fifth highest total of major honours won by an English club , having won the First Division Championship seven times , the FA Cup seven times , the Football League Cup five times , and the European Cup and UEFA Super Cup double in 1982 .

They have a fierce local rivalry with Birmingham City . The Second City derby between Aston Villa and Birmingham City has been played since 1879 . The club 's traditional kit colours are claret shirts with sky blue sleeves , white shorts and sky blue socks . Their traditional badge is of a rampant lion , which was introduced by the club 's Scottish chairman William McGregor in honour of the Royal Standard of Scotland .

= = History = =

Aston Villa Football Club were formed in March 1874 , by members of the Villa Cross Wesleyan Chapel in Handsworth which is now part of Birmingham . The four founders of Aston Villa were Jack Hughes , Frederick Matthews , Walter Price and William Scattergood . Aston Villa 's first match was against the local Aston Brook St Mary 's Rugby team . As a condition of the match , the Villa side had to agree to play the first half under rugby rules and the second half under football rules . After moving to the Wellington Road ground in 1876 , Villa soon established themselves as one of the best teams in the Midlands , winning their first honour , the Birmingham Senior Cup in 1880 , under the captaincy of Scotsman George Ramsay .

The club won their first FA Cup in 1887 with captain Archie Hunter becoming one of the game 's first household names . Aston Villa were one of the dozen teams that competed in the inaugural Football League in 1888 with one of the club 's directors , William McGregor being the league 's founder . Aston Villa emerged as the most successful English club of the Victorian era , winning no fewer than five League titles and three FA Cups by the end of Queen Victoria 's reign . In 1897 , the year Villa won The Double , they moved into their present home , the Aston Lower Grounds . Supporters coined the name " Villa Park " ; no official declaration listed the ground as Villa Park .

Aston Villa won their sixth FA Cup in 1920 , soon after though the club began a slow decline that led to Villa , at the time one of the most famous and successful clubs in world football , being relegated in 1936 for the first time to the Second Division . This was largely the result of a dismal defensive record : they conceded 110 goals in 42 games , 7 of them coming from Arsenal 's Ted Drake in an infamous 1 ? 7 defeat at Villa Park . Like all English clubs , Villa lost seven seasons to the Second World War , and that conflict brought several careers to a premature end . The team was rebuilt under the guidance of former player Alex Massie for the remainder of the 1940s . Aston Villa 's first trophy for 37 years came in the 1956 ? 57 season when another former Villa player , Eric Houghton led the club to a then record seventh FA Cup Final win , defeating the ' Busby Babes ' of Manchester United in the final . The team struggled in the league though and were relegated two seasons later , due in large part to complacency . However , under the stewardship of manager Joe Mercer Villa returned to the top @-@ flight in 1960 as Second Division Champions . The following season Aston Villa became the first team to win the Football League Cup .

Mercer 's forced retirement from the club in 1964 signalled a period of deep turmoil . The most successful club in England was struggling to keep pace with changes in the modern game , with Villa being relegated for the third time , under manager Dick Taylor in 1967 . The following season

the fans called for the board to resign as Villa finished 16th in the Second Division . With mounting debts and Villa lying at the bottom of Division Two , the board sacked Tommy Cummings ( the manager brought in to replace Taylor ) , and within weeks the entire board resigned under overwhelming pressure from fans . After much speculation , control of the club was bought by London financier Pat Matthews , who also brought in Doug Ellis as chairman . However , new ownership could not prevent Villa being relegated to the Third Division for the first time at the end of the 1969 ? 70 season . However , Villa gradually began to recover under the management of former club captain Vic Crowe . In the 1971 ? 72 season they returned to the Second Division as Champions with a record 70 points . In 1974 , Ron Saunders was appointed manager . His brand of no @-@ nonsense man @-@ management proved effective , with the club winning the League Cup the following season and , at the end of season 1974 ? 75 , he had taken them back into the First Division and into Europe .

Villa were back among the elite as Saunders continued to mould a winning team . This culminated in a seventh top @-@ flight league title in 1980 ? 81 . To the surprise of commentators and fans , Saunders quit halfway through the 1981 ? 82 season , after falling out with the chairman , with Villa in the quarter final of the European Cup . He was replaced by his softly @-@ spoken assistant manager Tony Barton who guided the club to a 1 ? 0 victory over Bayern Munich in the European Cup final in Rotterdam courtesy of a Peter Withe goal . The following season Villa were crowned European Super Cup winners , beating Barcelona in the final . This marked a pinnacle though and Villa 's fortunes declined sharply for most of the 1980s , culminating in relegation in 1987 . This was followed by promotion the following year under Graham Taylor and a runners @-@ up position in the First Division in the 1989 ? 90 season .

Villa were one of the founding members of the Premier League in 1992 , and finished runners @-@ up to Manchester United in the inaugural season . For the rest of the Nineties however Villa went through three different managers and their league positions were inconsistent , although they did win two League Cups and regularly achieved UEFA Cup qualification . Villa reached the FA Cup final in 2000 but lost 1 ? 0 to Chelsea in the last game to be played at the old Wembley Stadium . Again Villa 's league position continued to fluctuate under several different managers and things came to a head in the summer of 2006 when David O 'Leary left in acrimony . After 23 years as chairman and single biggest shareholder ( approximately 38 % ) , Doug Ellis finally decided to sell his stake in Aston Villa due to ill @-@ health . After much speculation it was announced the club was to be bought by American businessman Randy Lerner , owner of NFL franchise the Cleveland Browns .

The arrival of a new owner in Lerner and of manager Martin O 'Neill marked the start of a new period of optimism at Villa Park and sweeping changes occurred throughout the club including a new badge , a new kit sponsor and team changes in the summer of 2007 . The first Cup final of the Lerner era came in 2010 when Villa were beaten 2 ? 1 in the League Cup Final . Villa made a second trip to Wembley in that season losing 3 ? 0 to Chelsea in the FA Cup semifinal . Just five days before the opening day of the 2010 ? 11 season , O 'Neill resigned as manager with immediate effect . The club appointed Gérard Houllier as a replacement in September 2010 , but he stepped down on 1 June 2011 due to ill @-@ health . Houllier was replaced by Birmingham City manager Alex McLeish , despite numerous protests from fans against his appointment ; this was the first time that a manager had moved directly from Birmingham to Villa . McLeish 's contract was terminated at the end of the 2011 ? 12 season after Villa finished in 16th place , only just above the relegation zone . On 2 July 2012 , Aston Villa confirmed the appointment of former Norwich City manager Paul Lambert as the replacement for McLeish . On 28 February 2012 , the club announced a financial loss of £ 53 @. @ 9 million . Lerner put the club up for sale on 12 May 2014 , with an estimated value of £ 200 million . With Lerner still on board , in the 2014 ? 15 season Aston Villa scored just 12 goals in 25 league games , the lowest in Premier League history , and Lambert was sacked on 11 February 2015 . Tim Sherwood succeeded him , and saved Aston Villa from relegation while also leading them to the 2015 FA Cup Final , but he was sacked in the 2015 ? 16 season , as was his successor Rémi Garde . Eric Black took temporary charge of the team , but was not able to prevent Villa from being relegated for the first time since 1987 . On 2 June 2016 , Roberto Di Matteo was

announced as the club 's new manager .

= = Colours and badge = =

The club colours are a claret shirt with sky blue sleeves , white shorts with claret and blue trim , and sky blue socks with claret and white trim . They were the original wearers of the claret and blue . Villa 's colours at the outset generally comprised plain shirts ( white , grey or a shade of blue ) , with either white or black shorts . For a few years after that ( 1877 ? 79 ) the team wore several different kits from all white , blue and black , red and blue to plain green . By 1880 , black jerseys with a red lion embroidered on the chest were introduced by William McGregor . This remained the first choice strip for six years . On Monday , 8 November 1886 , an entry in the club 's official minute book states :

( i ) Proposed and seconded that the colours be chocolate and sky blue shirts and that we order two dozen .

( ii ) Proposed and seconded that Mr McGregor be requested to supply them at the lowest quotation .

The chocolate colour later became claret . Nobody is quite sure why claret and blue became the club 's adopted colours . Several other English football teams adopted their colours ; clubs that wear claret and blue include West Ham United and Burnley .

A new badge was revealed in May 2007 , for the 2007 ? 08 season and beyond . The new badge includes a star to represent the European Cup win in 1982 , and has a light blue background behind Villa 's ' lion rampant ' . The traditional motto " Prepared " remains in the badge , and the name Aston Villa has been shortened to AVFC , FC having been omitted from the previous badge . The lion is now unified as opposed to fragmented lions of the past . Randy Lerner petitioned fans to help with the design of the new badge .

On 6 April 2016 , the club confirmed that it will be using a new badge from the 2016 ? 17 season after consulting fan groups for suggestions . The lion in the new badge will have claws added to it and the word " Prepared " will be removed to increase the size of the lion and club initials in the badge .

= = Kit sponsorship = = =

Aston Villa forwent commercial kit sponsorship for the 2008 ? 09 and 2009 ? 10 seasons ; instead advertising the charity Acorns Children 's Hospice , the first deal of its kind in Premier league history . The partnership continued until 2010 when a commercial sponsor replaced Acorns , with the hospice becoming the club 's Official Charity Partner . In 2014 ? 15 , the Acorns name returned to Aston Villa 's home and away shirts , but only for children 's shirts re @-@ affirming the club 's support for the children 's charity .

Since 2015 Villa 's shirt sponsors have been Quickbooks . Previous commercial sponsors have been Davenports ( 1982 ? 83 ) , Mita ( 1983 ? 93 ) , Müller ( 1993 ? 95 ) , AST Computer ( 1995 ? 98 ) , LDV ( 1998 ? 2000 ) , NTL ( 2000 ? 02 ) , Rover ( 2002 ? 04 ) , DWS Investments ( 2004 ? 06 ) , 32Red.com ( 2006 ? 08 ) , FxPro ( 2010 ? 11 ) , Genting Casinos ( 2011 ? 13 ) , Dafabet ( 2013 ? 2015 ) , and Intuit QuickBooks ( 2015 ? ) . Since 2016 , kit has been manufactured by Under Armour . Previous manufacturers have been Umbro ( 1972 ? 81 , 1990 ? 93 ) , le Coq Sportif ( 1981 ? 83 ) , Henson ( 1983 ? 87 ) , Hummel ( 1987 ? 90 , 2004 ? 07 ) , Asics ( 1993 ? 95 ) , Reebok ( 1995 ? 2000 ) , Diadora ( 2000 ? 04 ) , Nike ( 2007 ? 12 ) and Macron ( 2012 @-@ 16 ) .

= = Stadium = =

Aston Villa 's current home venue is Villa Park , which is a UEFA 5 @-@ star rated stadium , having previously played at Aston Park ( 1874 ? 1876 ) and Wellington Road ( 1876 ? 1897 ) . Villa Park is the largest football stadium in the English Midlands , and the eighth largest stadium in England . It has hosted 16 England internationals at senior level , the first in 1899 , and the most recent in 2005 .

Thus , it was the first English ground to stage international football in three different centuries . Villa Park is the most used stadium in FA Cup semi @-@ final history , having hosted 55 semi @-@ finals . The club have planning permission to extend the North Stand ; this will involve the ' filling in ' of the corners to either side of the North Stand . If completed , the capacity of Villa Park will be increased to approximately 51 @,@ 000 .

The current training ground is located at Bodymoor Heath near Kingsbury in north Warwickshire , the site for which was purchased by former chairman Doug Ellis in the early 1970s from a local farmer . Although Bodymoor Heath was state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ art in the 1970s , by the late 1990s the facilities had started to look dated . In November 2005 , Ellis and Aston Villa plc announced a state of the art GB £ 13 million redevelopment of Bodymoor in two phases . However , work on Bodymoor was suspended by Ellis due to financial problems , and was left in an unfinished state until new owner Randy Lerner made it one of his priorities to make the site one of the best in world football . The new training ground was officially unveiled on 6 May 2007 , by then manager Martin O 'Neill , then team captain Gareth Barry and 1982 European Cup winning team captain Dennis Mortimer , with the Aston Villa squad moving in for the 2007 ? 08 season .

It was announced on 6 August 2014 , that Villa Park would appear in the FIFA video game from FIFA 15 onwards , with all other Premier League stadiums also fully licensed from this game onwards .

= = Ownership = =

The first shares in the club were issued towards the end of the 19th century as a result of legislation that was intended to codify the growing numbers of professional teams and players in the Association Football leagues . FA teams were required to distribute shares to investors as a way of facilitating trading among the teams without implicating the FA itself . This trading continued for much of the 20th century until Ellis started buying up many of the shares in the 1960s . He was chairman and substantial shareholder of " Aston Villa F.C. " from 1968 to 1975 and the majority shareholder from 1982 to 2006 . The club were floated on the London Stock Exchange ( LSE ) in 1996 , and the share price fluctuated in the ten years after the flotation . In 2006 it was announced that several consortia and individuals were considering bids for Aston Villa .

On 14 August 2006 , it was confirmed that Randy Lerner , then owner of the National Football League 's Cleveland Browns , had reached an agreement of £ 62 @.@ 6 million with Aston Villa for a takeover of the club . A statement released on 25 August to the LSE announced that Lerner had secured 59 @.@ 69 % of Villa shares , making him the majority shareholder . He also appointed himself Chairman of the club . In Ellis 's last year in charge Villa lost £ 8.2m before tax , compared with a £ 3m profit the previous year , and income had fallen from £ 51.6m to £ 49m . Lerner took full control on 18 September , as he had 89 @.@ 69 % of the shares . On 19 September 2006 , Ellis and his board resigned to be replaced with a new board headed by Lerner . Lerner installed Charles Krulak as a non @-@ executive director and Ellis was awarded the honorary position of Chairman Emeritus .

Lerner put the club up for sale in May 2014 , valuing it at an estimated £ 200 million .

On 18 May 2016 , Randy Lerner agreed the sale of Aston Villa to Recon Group , owned by Chinese businessman Xia Jiantong . The sale was completed on 14 June 2016 for a reported £ 76 million after being approved by the Football League , with the club becoming part of Recon Group 's Sport , Leisure and Tourism division . Recon Group were selected to take over Aston Villa following a selection process by the club .

= = Social responsibility = =

Aston Villa have a unique relationship with the Acorns Children 's Hospice charity that is groundbreaking in English football . In a first for the Premier League , Aston Villa donated the front of the shirt on their kit , usually reserved for high @-@ paying sponsorships , to Acorns Hospice so that the charity would gain significant additional visibility and greater fund raising capabilities .

Outside of the shirt sponsorship the club have paid for hospice care for the charity as well as regularly providing player visits to hospice locations .

In September 2010 , Aston Villa launched an initiative at Villa Park called Villa Midlands Food ( VMF ) where the club will spend two years training students with Aston Villa Hospitality and Events in association with Birmingham City Council . The club will open a restaurant in the Trinity Road Stand staffed with 12 students recruited from within a ten @-@ mile ( 16 km ) radius of Villa Park with the majority of the food served in the restaurant sourced locally .

= = Supporters and rivalries = =

Aston Villa have a large fanbase and draw support from all over the Midlands and beyond , with supporters ' clubs all across the world . Former Villa chief executive Richard Fitzgerald has stated that the ethnicity of the supporters is currently 98 % white . When Randy Lerner 's regime took over at Villa Park , they aimed to improve their support from ethnic minorities . A number of organisations have been set up to support the local community including Aston Pride . A Villa in the Community programme has also been set up to encourage support among young people in the region . The new owners have also initiated several surveys aimed at gaining the opinions of Villa fans and to involve them in the decision making process . Meetings also occur every three months where supporters are invited by ballot and are invited to ask questions to the Board . In 2011 , the club supported a supporter @-@ based initiative for an official anthem to boost the atmosphere at Villa Park . The song " The Bells Are Ringing " is to be played before games .

Like many English football clubs Aston Villa have had several hooligan firms associated with them : Villa Youth , Steamers , Villa Hardcore and the C @-@ Crew , the last mentioned being very active during the 1970s and 1980s . As can be seen across the whole of English football , the hooligan groups have now been marginalised . In 2004 , several Villa firms were involved in a fight with QPR fans outside Villa Park in which a steward died . The main groupings of supporters can now be found in a number of domestic and international supporters ' clubs . This includes the Official Aston Villa Supporters Club which also has many smaller regional and international sections . There were several independent supporters clubs during the reign of Doug Ellis but most of these disbanded after his retirement . The supporter group My Old Man Said formed to stand up for Villa supporter 's rights , as a direct result of Villa supporters ' protest against the club 's appointment of Alex McLeish . The club 's supporters also publish fanzines such as Heroes and Villains and The Holy Trinity .

Aston Villa 's arch @-@ rivals are Birmingham City , with games between the two clubs known as the Second City Derby . Historically though , West Bromwich Albion have arguably been Villa 's greatest rivals , a view highlighted in a fan survey , conducted in 2003 . The two teams contested three FA Cup finals in the late 19th century . Villa also enjoy less heated local rivalries with Wolverhampton Wanderers and Coventry City . Through the relegation of West Brom and Birmingham City , to the Football League Championship , in the 2005 ? 06 season , at the start of 2006 ? 07 Premiership season , Villa were the only Midlands club in that League . The nearest opposing team Villa faced during that season was Sheffield United , who played 62 miles ( 100 km ) away in South Yorkshire . For the 2010 ? 11 season , West Bromwich Albion were promoted and joined Aston Villa , Wolverhampton Wanderers , and Birmingham City in the Premier League . This marked the first time that the " West Midlands ' Big Four " clubs have been in the Premier League at the same time , and the first time together in the top flight since the 1983 ? 84 season . Birmingham were relegated at the end of the 2010 ? 11 season , ending this period .

= = Statistics = =

As of the end of the 2014 ? 15 season , Aston Villa have spent 104 seasons in the top tier of English football ; the only club to have spent longer in the top flight are Everton , with 112 seasons , making Aston Villa versus Everton the most @-@ played fixture in English top @-@ flight football . Aston Villa were in an elite group of seven clubs that has played in every Premier League season , the other six being Tottenham Hotspur , Chelsea , Everton , Liverpool , Manchester United and

Arsenal since its establishment in 1992 ? 93 until they were relegated in 2016 . They are seventh in the All @-@ time FA Premier League table , and have the fifth highest total of major honours won by an English club with 21 wins .

Aston Villa currently hold the record number of league goals scored by any team in the English top flight ; 128 goals were scored in the 1930 ? 31 season , one more than Arsenal who won the league that season for the very first time , with Villa runners @-@ up . Villa legend Archie Hunter became the first player to score in every round of the FA Cup in Villa 's victorious 1887 campaign . Villa 's longest unbeaten home run in the FA Cup spanned 13 years and 19 games , from 1888 to 1901 .

Aston Villa are one of five English teams to have won the European Cup . They did so on 26 May 1982 in Rotterdam , beating Bayern Munich 1 ? 0 thanks to Peter Withe 's goal .

= = Club honours = =

Aston Villa have won European and domestic league honours . The club 's last major honour was in 1996 when they won the League Cup .

= = = Domestic = = =

League titles

First Division 7 : 1893 ? 94 , 1895 ? 96 , 1896 ? 97 , 1898 ? 99 , 1899 ? 1900 , 1909 ? 10 , 1980 ? 81

Second Division 2 : 1937 ? 38 , 1959 ? 60

Third Division 1 : 1971 ? 72

Cups

FA Cup 7 :

1886 ? 87 , 1894 ? 95 , 1896 ? 97 , 1904 ? 05 , 1912 ? 13 , 1919 ? 20 , 1956 ? 57

League Cup 5 :

1960 ? 61 , 1974 ? 75 , 1976 ? 77 , 1993 ? 94 , 1995 ? 96

FA Charity Shield 1 :

1981

Football League War Cup 1 :

1944 ( shared )

= = = European = = =

European Cup 1 :

1981 ? 82

European Super Cup 1 :

1982

Intertoto Cup 2 :

2001 , 2008

= = = Other sports = = =

English Baseball Championship

1890

= = Players = =

= = = First @-@ team squad = = =

As of 21 June 2016 .

Note : Flags indicate national team as defined under FIFA eligibility rules . Players may hold more than one non @-@ FIFA nationality .

=== Out on loan ===

Note : Flags indicate national team as defined under FIFA eligibility rules . Players may hold more than one non @-@ FIFA nationality .

=== U21 squad ===

As of 21 June 2016 .

Note : Flags indicate national team as defined under FIFA eligibility rules . Players may hold more than one non @-@ FIFA nationality .

=== Notable players ===

There have been many players who can be called notable throughout Aston Villa 's history . These can be classified and recorded in several forms . The Halls of Fame and PFA Players of the Year are noted below . As of 2014 , Aston Villa , jointly with Tottenham Hotspur , hold the record for providing the most England internationals with 73 . Aston Villa have had several players who were one @-@ club men . In 1998 , to celebrate the 100th season of League football , The Football League released a list entitled the Football League 100 Legends that consisted of " 100 legendary football players . " There were seven players included on the list who had formerly played for Villa : Danny Blanchflower , Trevor Ford , Archie Hunter , Sam Hardy , Paul McGrath , Peter Schmeichel and Clem Stephenson .

Three Aston Villa players have won the PFA Players ' Player of the Year award . At the end of every English football season , the members of the Professional Footballers ' Association ( PFA ) vote on which of its members has played the best football in the previous year . In 1977 Andy Gray won the award . In 1990 it was awarded to David Platt , whilst Paul McGrath won it in 1993 . The PFA Young Player of the Year , which is awarded to players under the age of 23 , has been awarded to four players from Aston Villa : Andy Gray in 1977 ; Gary Shaw in 1981 ; Ashley Young in 2009 and James Milner in 2010 . The National Football Museum in Preston , Lancashire administers the English Football Hall of Fame which currently contains two Villa teams , two Villa players and one manager . The 1890s team and 1982 team were inducted into the Hall of Fame in July 2009 . Joe Mercer was inducted into the Hall of Fame at the same time for his career as a manager including his time at Aston Villa . The only two Villa players in the Hall of Fame are Danny Blanchflower and Peter Schmeichel .

In 2006 , Aston Villa announced the creation of an " Aston Villa Hall of Fame . " This was voted for by fans and the inaugural induction saw 12 former players , managers and directors named . In May 2013 it was announced that former Villa and Bulgaria captain , Stiliyan Petrov , would be the 13th addition to the Hall of Fame .

== Management ==

=== Current technical staff ===

As of 4 June 2016

=== Board of Directors ===

As of 15 June 2016

= = = Notable managers = = =

The following managers have all won at least one trophy when in charge or have been notable for Villa in the context of the League , for example Jozef Venglo? who holds a League record .

= = In popular culture = =

A number of television programmes have included references to Aston Villa over the past few decades . In the sitcom Porridge , the character Lennie Godber is a Villa supporter . When filming began on Dad 's Army , Villa fan Ian Lavender was allowed to choose Frank Pike 's scarf from an array in the BBC wardrobe ; he chose a claret and blue one ? Aston Villa 's colours . The character Nessa in the BBC sitcom Gavin & Stacey was revealed as an Aston Villa fan in an episode screened in December 2009 . In the BBC series " Yes Minister " / " Yes Prime Minister " , the Minister Jim Hacker 's local team was Aston Villa , as was the Member of Parliament for Birmingham East .

Aston Villa have also featured on several occasions in prose . Stanley Woolley , a character in Derek Robinson 's Booker shortlisted novel Goshawk Squadron is an Aston Villa fan and names a pre @-@ war starting eleven Villa side . Together with The Oval , Villa Park is referenced by the poet Philip Larkin in his poem about the First World War , MCMXIV . Aston Villa are also mentioned in Harold Pinter 's play The Dumb Waiter .