

= Darlington F.C. =

Darlington Football Club was an English football club based in Darlington, County Durham. The club was founded in 1883, and played its games at Feethams, before moving to the Darlington Arena in 2003. The arena is an all-seater stadium with a capacity of 25,000, although this was restricted to 10,000. The cost of the stadium was a major factor in driving the club into administration. The club originally played in regionally organised leagues, and were one of the founding members of the Northern League in 1889. They were first admitted to the Football League when the Third Division North was formed in 1921.

They won the Third Division North title in 1925, and their 15th place in the Second Division in 1926 remained their highest ever league finish. After their admission to the League, they spent most of their history in the bottom tier. They won the Third Division North Cup in 1934; their first victory in nationally organised cup competition. They reached the last 16 of the FA Cup twice, and the quarter-final of the Football League Cup once, in 1968. In the early 1990s they won successive titles, with the Conference National in 1990 and the Fourth Division in 1991. In 2011 they won the FA Trophy, defeating Mansfield Town 1–0 at Wembley Stadium.

In May 2012, the club was bought out of a period of administration without entering into a Creditors Voluntary Agreement (CVA). The Football Association ruled that it should be treated as a new club, which required a change of playing name. The name chosen was Darlington 1883, and that team was placed in the Northern League Division One, which is the ninth tier of English football, for the 2012–13 season.

The club's main rivals were Hartlepool United. The club's traditional colours were black and white shirts, black shorts and black and white socks. The club's crest depicted Locomotion No 1, referring to the town's railway history; as well as a stylised Quaker hat, referring to the religious movement that had a historic influence on the town, and which was the source of the team's nickname, the Quakers.

= = History = =

= = = Founding and pre-war = = =

In July 1883, a meeting was called in Darlington Grammar School to address concerns that so few Darlington-based football clubs were entering the major competition in the region, the Durham Challenge Cup. The meeting agreed with the view expressed by the Darlington & Stockton Times newspaper, that there was "no club, urban or rural, sufficiently powerful to worthily represent Darlington", decided to form a new club, and elected one Charles Samuel Craven, a local engineer, as secretary. Darlington Football Club duly entered the Durham Challenge Cup, reached the final in their first season, and won the trophy in 1885. The following season Darlington entered the FA Cup for the first time, only to lose 8–0 to Grimsby Town. Craven was instrumental in the formation of the Northern League in 1889. Darlington were one of the founder members, and went on to win the league title in 1896 and 1900; they reached the semi-final of the FA Amateur Cup in the same two seasons.

The club turned professional in 1908 and joined the North Eastern League. The 1910–11 season saw Darlington reach the last 16 of the FA Cup, progressing through five qualifying rounds to lose to Swindon Town in the Third Round Proper, and two years later they won the North Eastern League. Ground improvements begun before the First World War left the club in financial difficulty during it; the chairman of Darlington Forge Albion financed the completion of the East Stand and cleared the debts, allowing them to continue to compete. When competitive football resumed after the war, Darlington finished second in the North Eastern League, and were champions for a second time the following year. This victory was well timed, as it coincided with the formation of the Northern Section of the Football League's Third Division, which Darlington were invited to join.

Their first season in the Third Division was a successful one and they ended up in second place.

Three years later , in 1924 ? 25 , they were champions and won promotion to the Football League Second Division . The 15th @-@ place finish in 1926 remains Darlington 's best League performance , but they were relegated back to the Third Division in 1927 , where they remained until the Second World War put an end to competitive football . They came as high as third in 1929 ? 30 , but twice had to apply for re @-@ election to the League , in 1932 ? 33 and 1936 ? 37 , after finishing in last place in the section . In 1934 , they enjoyed their first success in a nationally @-@ organised cup competition , defeating Stockport County 4 ? 3 at Old Trafford to win the Football League Third Division North Cup , and reached the final again two years later , this time losing 2 ? 1 at home to Chester .

= = = Post @-@ war = = =

Soon after the Football Association gave permission for competitive matches to be played under floodlights , Darlington beat Carlisle United 3 ? 1 in the first floodlit FA Cup match between Football League clubs , a replay held at St James ' Park , Newcastle United 's ground , in November 1955 . The 1957 ? 58 season saw the club equal their previous best FA Cup run , reaching the last 16 by defeating Chelsea , Football League champions only three years earlier , in the Fourth Round . After letting slip a three @-@ goal lead at Stamford Bridge , Darlington won the replay 4 ? 1 after extra time , described as " a most meritorious win , earned by a combination of sound tactics and an enthusiasm that Chelsea never equalled " by The Times ' correspondent , who felt it " surprising that extra time was necessary , for Darlington always seemed to have the match well in hand " . In the League , Darlington 's fourth place in 1948 ? 49 was their only top @-@ half finish in the first twelve seasons after the war , and when the regional sections of the Third Division were merged , they were allocated to the new Fourth Division .

The Supporters ' Club raised £ 20 @,@ 000 to pay for a roof at one end of the Feethams ground and for floodlights , which were first used on 19 September 1960 . Later that night , the West Stand burned down due to an electrical fault . Darlington 's attendance record , of 21 @,@ 023 against Bolton Wanderers in the League Cup fourth round , was set two months later . Under the management of Lol Morgan , they won promotion to the Third Division in 1966 . A crowd of 16 @,@ 000 watched the draw against Torquay United on the last day of the season which ensured they finished as runners @-@ up , but they were relegated the following year .

Darlington reached the quarter @-@ finals of the 1968 League Cup ; drawn away to Brian Clough 's Derby County , they took the lead , only to lose 5 ? 4 . During the 1970s the club had to apply for re @-@ election to the League five times , and by 1982 they were facing a financial crisis which they survived thanks to fundraising efforts in the town . Three years later they won promotion by finishing third in the league under manager Cyril Knowles . Darlington spent two seasons in the Third Division ; the 13th @-@ place finish in 1986 was the highest position they achieved in the Football League since the introduction of the four @-@ division structure in 1958 , but they were relegated the following season .

Though Brian Little 's appointment as manager in February 1989 failed to stave off relegation to the Conference , he went on to lead them to successive promotions . An immediate return to the Football League as Conference champions preceded the Fourth Division title in 1990 ? 91 , but Little 's departure for Leicester City was followed by relegation and a succession of short @-@ term managers . They came close to a return to the Third Division via the play @-@ offs in 1996 ; on their first visit to Wembley , against Plymouth Argyle , they were beaten by a Ronnie Mauge goal .

= = = Reynolds and after = = =

The 1999 ? 2000 season , the first under new chairman George Reynolds , was marked by Darlington becoming the first team to lose an FA Cup tie and still qualify for the next round . Manchester United 's involvement in the FIFA Club World Championship meant they did not enter the FA Cup . To decide who took their place , a " lucky losers " draw was held from the 20 teams knocked out in the second round ; Darlington were selected , and lost their third @-@ round tie 2 ? 1

to Aston Villa at Villa Park . Their second Wembley appearance came later that season , facing Peterborough United in the play @-@ off final after automatic promotion had seemed certain earlier in the season . After a 3 ? 0 aggregate semi @-@ final win over Hartlepool United , Quakers missed numerous chances and were again undone by a single goal , this time from Andy Clarke .

In 2002 , Darlington made unsuccessful approaches to sign Paul Gascoigne and Faustino Asprilla , and moved into their new stadium , named the Reynolds Arena , in summer 2003 . Reynolds had paid the club 's debts when he took over , but the cost of the stadium , partly financed with high @-@ interest loans and built without realistic expectation of filling it , drove the club into administration six months later . Reynolds resigned as a director in January 2004 with the club under threat of imminent closure . A benefit match , featuring footballers such as Gascoigne , Bryan Robson and Kenny Dalglish , played in front of a crowd of over 14 @,@ 000 , raised £ 100 @,@ 000 to help ensure survival in the short term . Despite the off @-@ field problems , David Hodgson , in his third spell as manager , and his players produced some fine performances as the team avoided relegation .

At the end of the season , Reynolds was obliged to hand over control to the Sterling Consortium to bring the club out of administration , Stewart Davies taking over as chairman . He and his staff adopted a fan @-@ friendly approach , in contrast to the abrasive Reynolds , before in 2006 , the club was sold to property developer George Houghton . For four consecutive seasons , under Hodgson , sacked in 2006 , and then under successor Dave Penney , the Quakers finished in the top half of the table , reaching the play @-@ off semi @-@ final in 2008 only to lose to Rochdale on penalties . In February 2009 , Darlington again went into administration , triggering an automatic 10 @-@ point deduction , without which they would have again reached the play @-@ offs . Fundraising efforts kept the club going , but when no buyer was found for the club by a May deadline , the administrators made the majority of the first @-@ team squad available for transfer and cut staff numbers to a minimum . On 20 May , Houghton returned to the club as chairman , appointed former Middlesbrough boss Colin Todd as manager , and brokered an agreement which led to the club coming out of administration and ownership passing to local businessman Raj Singh , enabling the club to compete in the 2009 ? 10 season without any points deduction . Todd left the club after losing seven of his first nine games and was replaced by former Republic of Ireland manager Steve Staunton , who only won four of 23 league games .

The club were eventually relegated to the Conference , and suffered more managerial turmoil during the summer when Simon Davey and successor Ryan Kidd both left within 11 days , to leave Mark Cooper in charge . He led the club to victory in the 2011 FA Trophy Final at Wembley Stadium , defeating Mansfield Town 1 ? 0 with a goal from Chris Senior in the last minute of extra time . Following a succession of poor performances at the start of the 2011 ? 12 season , Cooper and his assistant Richard Dryden were sacked by the club on 24 October 2011 . A little more than two months later , Singh placed the club into administration for a third time in less than a decade . A number of players were released and allowed to join other clubs for nominal fees in January before interim manager Craig Liddle and the remaining playing staff had their contracts terminated by Darlington 's administrator . Two days later , the club was spared from liquidation after a last @-@ minute injection of funding by supporters ' groups . Enough funds were raised for Darlington to complete the season , but relegation was confirmed with three matches remaining . After the club was taken over with the intention of moving into community ownership , without entering into a Creditors Voluntary Agreement (CVA) , Darlington were relegated four divisions , to the Northern League Division One , on the recommendation of the Football Association . Martin Gray was appointed manager . On 21 June 2012 , the Football Association rejected an appeal , confirming that the club was to be treated as a new club entered into the Northern League , and would no longer be able to play under the name Darlington F.C. The new owners opted to rename the new club Darlington 1883 .

= = Colours and badge = =

In 1888 , Darlington 's kit consisted of a shirt with black and white vertical stripes , black shorts and

black socks . Apart from a period between the 1910s and 1936 , when blue shorts were worn , the basic colours of the home kit have remained black and white . The shirt design has varied , from the 1888 vertical stripes , through hoops , plain white , and back to hoops again in the 1990s . Sponsors ' names have appeared on Darlington 's shirts since the 1980s . A table of kit manufacturers (since the 1970s) and shirt sponsors appears on the right .

Supporters were invited to vote for the design of the 2010 ? 11 kit , to be manufactured by Erreà ; options for the home shirt each had black @-@ and @-@ white hoops , while the proposed away colours were either the traditional red or sky @-@ blue and white . The front of the home shirt has black @-@ and @-@ white hoops with a curved white panel , the back is largely white , and it has black sleeves with white trim and a black collar ; shorts are white and socks have black @-@ and @-@ white hoops . The design originally chosen had to be changed to comply with Conference rules prohibiting predominantly black kit (to avoid a clash with match officials ' colours) . The away kit is all red with black trim on the shirt . The shirts bear the name of hotel The Morritt , winners of the right to sponsor the shirt in a draw from among seven local businesses , each of which had purchased a hospitality package .

The club badge is in the form of a shield , divided diagonally into two parts ; the smaller section , to the upper right , is in the club 's home colour of white , the larger is red , their traditional away colour . In the white section is a stylised Quaker hat , emblematic of the major role played by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the history of the town . The larger section depicts George Stephenson 's Locomotion No 1 , the steam locomotive that hauled the first train on the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825 , representing the importance of the railway industry to the area . Across the bottom of the shield is a ribbon bearing the club 's nickname , The Quakers , and the whole rests on a bed of oak leaves , symbolic of strength and endurance .

= = Stadia = =

Feethams was originally used by Darlington Cricket Club , but began to be used for football in the 1860s . Darlington F.C. began playing there when they formed in 1883 . With growing crowd figures , the ground was expanded with the construction of the West stand at the turn of the twentieth century , and the construction of the Polam Lane end in 1905 . In 1913 , a pair of towers were built at the entrance to the ground , and in 1920 , offices and changing rooms were built underneath the East stand . Floodlights were installed in September 1960 , but after their first use an electrical fault gutted the West stand in a fire , prompting its rebuilding . In 1997 , the East stand was demolished and rebuilt as an all seater stand . The new stand brought the capacity of the stadium up to 8 @,@ 000 . However , the £ 3 million cost of the stand had a major negative effect on the club , and George Reynolds came in to stabilise the club . He initiated the construction of the 25 @,@ 000 seat Darlington Arena . The last match played at Feethams was a 2 ? 2 draw with Leyton Orient on 3 May 2003 . Following the closure of the ground , the floodlights were sold to Workington A.F.C. and the stadium demolished . A 160 @-@ house housing estate was planned for the cleared site .

The all @-@ seater Darlington Arena was opened in 2003 , at a cost of £ 18 million . The first game at the new stadium was a 2 ? 0 loss to Kidderminster Harriers on 16 August 2003 . The attendance of 11 @,@ 600 still stands as a record for the ground . Though the stadium can seat up to 25 @,@ 000 people , the club is restricted to just 10 @,@ 000 because of county and local planning regulations . The club struggled to fill the new stadium and entered administration in February 2009 .

Although generally known as the Darlington Arena , the ground has had a number of official names due to sponsorship reasons ; between 2003 and 2004 it was known as the Reynolds Arena , the Williamson Motors Stadium from 2004 to 2005 , the 96 @.@ 6 TFM Darlington Arena from 2005 to 2007 , the Balfour Webnet Darlington Arena between 2007 and 2009 , and since then it has been known as The Northern Echo Darlington Arena .

= = Supporters and rivalries = =

Darlington 's supporters consider Hartlepool United as their main rivals . The feeling is reciprocated : in a 2008 survey , 95 % of supporters of both clubs named the other as their bitterest rivals . The clubs , based 25 miles (40 km) apart , with Middlesbrough directly between the two towns , had met 147 times (as of 2009 ? 10) , of which Hartlepool won 60 to Darlington 's 57 . The meeting between the two clubs in 2007 attracted a crowd of 10 @, @ 121 to the Darlington Arena , the largest attendance for that League fixture for 50 years , though the average League attendance at the stadium declined from over 5 @, @ 000 in its opening season to 2 @, @ 744 in 2009 ? 10 .

Darlington has an official supporters ' club and an away supporters group , known as Darlington Away Far Travelling Supporters (DAFTS) , who represent Darlington supporters from places elsewhere in the country . A supporters ' trust was founded in 2002 ; it established a Disabled Supporters Group , tried to maintain a working relationship between club and supporters , and , together with the Darlington Camera Club , staged a " Farewell to Feethams " exhibition in celebration of the club 's longtime home . Together with the supporters ' club , the trust has been actively involved in fund @-@ raising particularly during the club 's periods of administration .

Fanzines included Mission Impossible , first published in the early 1990s , and Where 's The Money Gone , whose teenage editor , along with the editor of website Darlo Uncovered , Scott Thornberry , were among several supporters banned from the ground by chairman George Reynolds for criticising the running of the club .

The team mascot was Mr Q , described as " a flat @-@ looking cartoon man with a very big hat " . In 2006 , he was joined , and later replaced , by Darlo Dog , a Dalmatian , who was once ejected from the ground for climbing on the advertising boards in front of television cameras . Darlo Dog retired at the end of the 2009 ? 10 season ; his successor , a panda named Feethams , was chosen via a design competition .

= = Honours = =

Honours achieved by Darlington since their foundation in 1883 include the following :

= = = League = = =

Football League Third Division North : 1

1924 ? 25

Runners @-@ up : 1921 ? 22

Fourth Division : 1990 ? 91

Runners @-@ up : 1965 ? 66

Football Conference : 1

1989 ? 90

Northern League : 2

1895 ? 96 , 1899 ? 1900

Runners @-@ up : 1896 ? 97 , 1898 ? 99

North Eastern League : 2

1912 ? 13 , 1920 ? 21

Runners @-@ up : 1919 ? 20

= = = Cup = = =

FA Trophy : 1

2010 ? 11

Football League Third Division North Cup : 1

1933 ? 34

Runners @-@ up : 1935 ? 36

Durham Challenge Cup : 6

1884 ? 85 , 1890 ? 91 , 1892 ? 93 , 1896 ? 97 , 1919 ? 20 , 1999 ? 2000

= = Records = =

Darlington 's highest league finish was fifteenth in the Football League Second Division , during the 1925 ? 26 season . The club 's best performance in the FA Cup has been two appearances in the last 16 of the competition . This first was in 1910 ? 11 , when they lost to Swindon Town in the third round . The second was in the 1957 ? 58 season , when they beat Chelsea 4 ? 1 in a replay to reach the fifth round , in which they lost 6 ? 1 to Wolverhampton Wanderers . The club 's best League Cup performance was reaching the quarter @-@ final in the 1967 ? 68 season .

The Quakers ' biggest home win was a 13 ? 1 defeat of Scarborough in the FA Cup on 24 October 1891 . Their best away win was on 22 October 1921 , when they beat Durham City 7 ? 3 in the Third Division North .

The player with the most league appearances for Darlington is Ron Greener with 439 between 1955 and 1967 . He made a total of 490 senior appearances for the club . Alan Walsh scored a club @-@ record 87 league goals between 1978 and 1984 , and scored 100 goals for Darlington overall . The most league goals scored for the club by a single player in a season is 39 , by David Brown in the 1924 ? 25 season . Franz Burgmeier has the most senior international appearances while a Darlington player , with seven caps for Liechtenstein in the 2008 ? 09 season .

= = = Dream team = = =

As part of the " Farewell to Feethams " celebrations , a competition in the club programme in 2003 selected the following all @-@ time " Dream Team " : Mark Prudhoe , Ron Greener , Craig Liddle , Kevan Smith , John Peverell , Andy Toman , David McLean , Alan Sproates , Alan Walsh , Marco Gabbiadini and Colin Sinclair . Gabbiadini , scorer of 53 goals in his two seasons at Darlington , was voted greatest ever player .