

= Gillingham F.C. =

Gillingham Football Club is a professional association football club based in the town of Gillingham , Kent , England . The only Kent @-@ based club in the Football League , the " Gills " play their home matches at the Priestfield Stadium . The team compete in League One , the third tier of the English football league system .

The club was founded in 1893 and joined the Football League in 1920 . They were voted out of the league in favour of Ipswich Town at the end of the 1937 ? 38 season , but returned to it 12 years later after it was expanded from 88 to 92 clubs . Twice in the late 1980s they came close to winning promotion to the second tier of English football , but a decline then set in and in 1993 they narrowly avoided relegation to the Football Conference . Between 2000 and 2005 , Gillingham were in the second tier of the English football league system for the only time in their history , achieving a club record highest league finish of eleventh place in 2002 ? 03 .

= = History = =

= = = Early years = = =

The local success of a junior football side , Chatham Excelsior F.C. , encouraged a group of businessmen to meet with a view to creating a football club which could compete in larger competitions . New Brompton F.C. was formed at the meeting , held on 18 May 1893 . The founders also purchased the plot of land which later became Priestfield Stadium . The new club played its first match on 2 September 1893 , losing 1 ? 5 to Woolwich Arsenal 's reserve side in front of a crowd of 2 @,@ 000 . New Brompton were among the founder members of the Southern League upon its creation in 1894 , and were placed in Division Two . They were named Champions in the first season (1894 ? 95) going on to defeat Swindon Town in a test match to win promotion .

In the seasons that followed , the club struggled in Division One , finishing bottom in the 1907 ? 08 season , avoiding relegation only due to expansion of the league . Whilst the club 's league performance was disappointing , the side did manage a famous cup victory over Football League First Division Sunderland and held Manchester City to a draw before losing in the replay . In 1912 the directors passed a resolution to change the club 's name to Gillingham F.C. , and the team played under this name throughout the 1912 ? 13 season , although the change was not officially ratified by the shareholders until the following year . The team finished bottom of Division One in the 1919 ? 20 season but for a third time avoided relegation , due to the subsequent elevation of all Southern League Division One clubs to form the new Football League Division Three .

= = = First spell in the Football League = = =

In the first season of the newly created Football League Division Three , the 1920 ? 21 season , Gillingham again finished bottom , and in the years to follow there was little improvement on this , the club continually finishing in the lower reaches of the bottom division . In 1938 the team finished bottom of the Third Division (South) and were required to apply for re @-@ election for the fifth time since joining the league . This bid for re @-@ election failed , with Gillingham returning to the Southern League and Ipswich Town being promoted in their place . Gillingham quickly established themselves as one of the stronger sides in the league , winning a local double of the Kent League and Kent Senior Cup in the 1945 ? 46 season . In the 1946 ? 47 season the team won both the Southern League Cup and the Southern League championship , during which they recorded a club record 12 ? 1 victory over Gloucester City . The Gills also won the league title in 1948 ? 49 .

= = = Return to the Football League = = =

In 1950 , plans were announced to expand the Football League Division Three (South) from 22 to

24 teams and , taking into account their local success in the interim , Gillingham were re-elected to the Football League with a landslide vote . The team spent eight seasons in Division Three (South) before the restructuring of the league system for the 1958 ? 59 season saw them placed in the newly created Fourth Division . They remained in this division until 1964 , when manager Freddie Cox led them to promotion , winning the first championship in the club 's history . The team finished the season level on 60 points with Carlisle United , but with a fractionally better goal average (1 @. @ 967 against 1 @. @ 948) , which was the tightest league title finish in Football League history .

After relegation back to the Fourth Division in 1970 ? 71 , the Gills were soon promoted back to the Third Division in the 1973 ? 74 season . After this the club seemed to find its level in Division Three , regularly mounting a challenge for promotion which ultimately fell short each time , never more so than in 1986 ? 87 when they reached the play @-@ offs only to lose in the final to Swindon Town . During this period the club produced future stars Steve Bruce and Tony Cascarino , who was famously bought from non @-@ league Crockenhill in exchange for a set of tracksuits .

In 1987 , the Gills hit the headlines when , on consecutive Saturdays , they beat Southend United 8 ? 1 and Chesterfield 10 ? 0 , the latter a club record for a Football League match . Just a few months later , however , manager Keith Peacock was controversially sacked , and within 18 months the club had fallen into Division Four . The ensuing spell in the lower division brought little success , and in the 1992 ? 93 Division Three campaign the Gills narrowly avoided relegation to the Football Conference .

= = = Recent highs and lows = = =

Beset with financial problems , the club went into administration in January 1995 , and by the end of the 1994 ? 95 season faced the threat of being expelled from the Football League and closed down . In June 1995 , however , a London @-@ based businessman , Paul Scally , stepped in and bought the club . He brought in new manager Tony Pulis , who led Gillingham to promotion in his first season , finishing second in the old Division Three (now Football League Two) . In 1999 the Gills made the play @-@ offs but lost in the Division Two play @-@ off final to Manchester City . The Gills were 2 ? 0 up with less than two minutes left only to see City score twice , the equaliser in injury time , and go on to win 3 ? 1 in a penalty shoot @-@ out .

Soon after the play @-@ off loss , Pulis was sacked for gross misconduct , and Peter Taylor appointed manager . In the 1999 ? 00 season Gillingham qualified for the play @-@ offs again , where they faced Wigan Athletic in the final at Wembley Stadium . The game finished 1 ? 1 after 90 minutes , but , thanks to goals in extra time from substitutes Steve Butler and Andy Thomson , the Gills won 3 ? 2 and were promoted to Division One for the first time .

Taylor then left to manage Leicester City , and Andy Hessenthaler was appointed as player @-@ manager . He led the club to their best ever league finish of eleventh in the 2002 ? 03 season , but the following season saw the club narrowly avoid relegation on goal difference . Hessenthaler resigned as manager in November 2004 , and new boss Stan Ternent was unable to prevent the Gills ' relegation to League One . At the end of the 2007 ? 08 season the club was relegated again , this time to League Two , but an immediate return to the third level was secured via the play @-@ offs after beating Shrewsbury Town . In the 2009 ? 10 season , however , the Gills slipped into the bottom four on the last day , and were relegated back to League Two , having failed to win a single away game in the league all season . This resulted in manager Mark Stimson having his contract terminated , and Andy Hessenthaler was appointed as manager of the club for the second time . At the start of the 2012 ? 13 season Hessenthaler was replaced by Martin Allen , who led the club to promotion as League Two champions in his first season in charge . However , shortly after winning League Two , Martin Allen was sacked in what many saw as a " surprise sacking " after a poor start to the season . Peter Taylor returned for a second spell in charge , but following his sacking in December 2014 he was replaced by Justin Edinburgh .

= = = = Finances = = = =

Since 2002 , the club has faced severe financial difficulties as a result of various events including the collapse of ITV Digital , relegation from the Championship , and the cost of refurbishing the stadium . In 2006 EDF Energy cut off power to the stadium as a result of unpaid bills of approximately £ 100 @, @ 000 . By 2008 , the club 's level of debt had reached approximately £ 13 million , although this was reduced dramatically as a result of the sale of Priestfield Stadium to a new holding company . In 2011 , however , the club bought the stadium back for £ 1 million , considerably less than the £ 10 million for which it was sold in 2008 . The club also resolved not to hold any more AGMs or allow any formal discussion on the business of the club .

During the 2012 ? 13 season , however , Gillingham 's financial position improved as the club received several unexpected cash windfalls , with the sale of Paulo Gazzaniga to Southampton , a large profit due from a sell @-@ on clause for Matt Jarvis and ongoing add @-@ ons in the deal that saw Ryan Bertrand head to Chelsea .

= = Stadium = =

The Gills have played at Priestfield Stadium throughout their existence . The ground was originally purchased by the founders of the club through an issue of 1 @, @ 500 £ 1 shares . Sources differ on whether the ground was named after the road on which the land stood , Priestfield Road , or whether the road was named after the ground ; if the latter is the case then the origin of the ground 's name is unknown . The ground was extensively developed prior to the 1930s , but there was then little change until the late 1990s and the arrival of Paul Scally as chairman . Three of the four stands were demolished and rebuilt between 1995 and 2000 . The fourth stand , known as the Town End , was demolished to make way for a new stand , to be named the Brian Moore Stand after television sports commentator Brian Moore , who was a well @-@ known Gills fan , but the club 's financial situation has not allowed the new stand to be built and a temporary stand has been in place since 2004 . From 2007 until 2010 the stadium was officially named KRBS Priestfield Stadium as part of a sponsorship deal with the Kent Reliance Building Society . In 2011 it was rebranded again , this time , to MEMS Priestfield Stadium under another such agreement .

At its peak in the 1940s the official capacity of the stadium was listed as " between 25 @, @ 000 and 30 @, @ 000 " but subsequent redevelopments , the removal of terraces and building of new facilities have seen this reduced to a current capacity of 11 @, @ 582 . In the 2007 ? 08 season , the average attendance at home matches was 6 @, @ 077 , just 52 % of capacity . The ground has also hosted home fixtures of the England women 's national football team .

The club 's training ground is Beechings Cross , in Grange Road , Gillingham . In 2012 the club was involved in a dispute with the local council , who alleged that Gillingham owed over £ 30 @, @ 000 in unpaid bills relating to the facility .

= = Colours and crest = =

Although Gillingham have long been associated with the colours blue and white , the original New Brompton side wore a strip consisting of black and white striped shirts with black shorts . In 1913 the black and white strip was dropped in favour of red shirts with blue sleeves , emblazoned with the borough 's coat of arms . The striped shirts returned after World War One , before finally being replaced with the now @-@ familiar combination of plain blue shirts and white shorts in 1931 . More recent years have seen several variations on the blue and white colour scheme . In the late 1990s the team wore blue and black striped shirts , recalling the original New Brompton stripes . In the summer of 2003 it was controversially announced that the club 's first choice shirts for the following season would be predominantly white , rather than blue . The announcement received such a hostile response from supporters that the white strip was replaced by one featuring blue and black hoops , which had originally been earmarked as the team 's third choice kit . In March 2010 the club announced a return to the black and blue stripes for the 2010 ? 11 season . In recognition of the centenary of the renaming of the club , the 2012 ? 13 kit was red with blue sleeves and collar , and

the club 's crest was replaced by the town 's crest . After winning the League Two title in 2012 ? 13 , the club gave season ticket holders the chance to vote on what colours the club would play in for the 2013 ? 14 season , with the fans choosing to return to a blue and white kit .

The club 's current crest is a shield divided vertically into halves of black and white stripes and solid blue , reflecting the club 's original and modern kits . On the blue half is the county emblem of Kent , a white horse rampant , albeit slightly altered from its normal form as its mane is stylised into the letters of the word " Gills " . This side has been sometimes given a red or pink background , to coordinate with away kits featuring those colours . The club 's motto , which appears on a scroll below the crest , is Domus clamantium , the Latin for " the home of the shouting men " , a traditional epithet associated with the town of Gillingham . In keeping with the crest , the club 's mascot , Tommy Trewblu , takes the form of a horse . He first appeared at a match against Macclesfield Town in October 1998 .

The first sponsor 's name to appear on Gillingham shirts was that of Italian home appliance manufacturers Zanussi , who sponsored the club in the mid @-@ 1980s . Subsequent sponsors have included Chatham Maritime , Medway Toyota , Cannon Tool Hire , Invicta FM , Kool , Medway News , SeaFrance , MHS Homes Group , Kent Reliance Building Society , Automatic Retailing , and MEMS Power Generation .

= = Players = =

= = = Current squad = = =

As of 26 July 2016 .

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

= = = Notable former players = = =

The club launched a Hall of Fame prior to the 2008 ? 09 season . The first five players to be elected were chosen by a fan vote in 2009 . One new inductee was to be elected every year thereafter , but this has not been done .

John Simpson

Andy Hessenthaler

Brian Yeo

Tony Cascarino

Steve Bruce

= = = International players = = =

The club recognises thirteen players as having gained full international caps during their time at Priestfield , although other sources indicate that Freddie Fox had in fact left the club by the time he made his only appearance for England .

In 2006 , Sancho became the first Gillingham player ever to play in the World Cup finals , and technically the first to score in the World Cup when he scored an own goal in the 2 ? 0 group defeat to Paraguay .

= = Club officials = =

As at 22 July 2016

= = = Management = = =

= = = Technical staff = = =

= = Managers = =

For the first three years of the club 's existence , team matters were handled by a committee . In 1896 William Ironside Groombridge , the club 's secretary , took sole charge of team affairs to become Gillingham 's first recognised manager . Former England international Stephen Smith was appointed as full @-@ time manager in 1906 , but left in 1908 , with Groombridge once again taking on team responsibilities . Groombridge was associated with the club , as manager and secretary , for over 25 years . When the club was admitted to the Football League in 1920 , Robert Brown was appointed as manager , but he resigned a month later before the season had even begun . His replacement , Scotsman John McMillan , thus became the first manager to take charge of the team in a Football League match .

In 1939 , a year after the club was voted back out of the Football League , Archie Clark took over as manager , and was still in charge when the club was elected back to the Football League in 1950 . Clark remained in the job until 1957 . Freddie Cox took over in 1962 and led the club to the Football League Fourth Division championship in the 1963 ? 64 season , making him the first manager to win a Football League divisional title with the club . Basil Hayward was sacked in 1971 after the club was relegated back to the Fourth Division in the 1970 ? 71 season , but his successor Andy Nelson led the club to promotion back to Division Three three years later before controversially resigning .

Tony Pulis took over in 1995 , with Gillingham once again in the bottom division , and managed the club to promotion in his first season in charge . Three years later he led the team to the Second Division play @-@ off final , but was sacked immediately after this after being accused of gross misconduct . Peter Taylor replaced him and took the club to a second consecutive play @-@ off final , where Gillingham gained promotion to the second tier of English football for the first time . In 2013 Martin Allen became the second manager to lead the Gills to a divisional title in the Football League , as the team won the championship of League Two .

= = Chairmen = =

The following men have been chairman of the club 's Board of Directors :

= = Honours = =

Third tier of English football (Football League Third Division / Third Division South from 1920 ? 1992 , Football League Second Division from 1992 ? 2004 , Football League One since 2004)

Play @-@ off winners 1999 ? 00 , play @-@ off finalists 1986 ? 87 & 1998 ? 99

Fourth tier of English football (Football League Fourth Division from 1958 ? 1992 , Football League Third Division from 1992 ? 2004 , Football League Two since 2004)

Champions 1963 ? 64 & 2012 ? 13 , runners @-@ up 1973 ? 74 & 1995 ? 96 , play @-@ off winners 2008 ? 09

Southern Football League

Champions 1946 ? 47 & 1948 ? 49 , runners up 1947 ? 48

Southern Football League Division Two

Champions 1894 ? 95

Southern League Cup

Winners 1946 ? 47

Kent League

Champions 1945 ? 46

Kent League Cup

Winners 1945 ? 46

Kent Senior Cup

Winners 1945 ? 46 & 1947 ? 48 , runners @-@ up 1938 ? 39 , 1948 ? 49 , 1949 ? 50 & 1994 ? 95

= = Statistics and records = =

Goalkeeper Ron Hillyard holds the record for Gillingham appearances , having played 657 matches in all competitions between 1974 and 1990 , while the record for appearances solely in the Football League is held by another goalkeeper , John Simpson , with 571 between 1957 and 1972 . Brian Yeo is the club 's all @-@ time leading league goalscorer , having scored a total of 136 goals between 1963 and 1975 . He also jointly holds the club record for the most Football League goals scored in a single season , having scored 31 goals in the 1973 ? 74 season , equalling the record set by Ernie Morgan in 1954 ? 55 . The highest number of goals scored by a player in a single game at a professional level is the six registered by Fred Cheesmur against Merthyr Town in April 1930 .

The club 's record home attendance is 23 @,@ 002 , for an FA Cup match against QPR on 10 January 1948 , a record which will almost certainly never be broken unless the club relocates to a larger ground , given that Priestfield Stadium 's current capacity is approximately half that figure .

The team 's biggest ever professional win was a 10 ? 0 defeat of Chesterfield in September 1987 , although they had previously registered a 12 ? 1 win against Gloucester City in the Southern League in November 1946 .

The Gills hold the record for the fewest goals conceded by a team in the course of a 46 @-@ game season , having conceded just 20 in the 1995 ? 96 season , during which goalkeeper Jim Stannard kept 29 clean sheets .

= = Rivalries = =

The 2003 Football Fans Census revealed that no other team 's supporters considered Gillingham to be among their club 's main rivals . Millwall are considered to be the closest the Gills have to local rivals . Swindon Town are seen by many fans as the club 's biggest rivals , stemming from bad @-@ tempered matches between the two teams in the past . While Swindon fans generally do not consider Gillingham their biggest rivals , there was violence when they met at Priestfield in the 2005 ? 06 season , their first meeting since a promotion play @-@ off match in 1987 . Following their promotion in 1989 , Maidstone United became Kent 's second League side . A rivalry with Gillingham developed over the following seasons , until Maidstone 's financial troubles forced them to resign from the League in 1992 .

= = In popular culture = =

In 1956 , comedian Fred Emney filmed a scene for his sitcom Emney Enterprises prior to the start of a match between Gillingham and Brighton & Hove Albion . The footage featured the overweight Emney , wearing a flat cap and monocle and smoking a cigar , dribbling the ball past the entire Gills defence and scoring a goal . In the Sky1 television series Dream Team , fictional team Harchester United lost 2 ? 0 to the Gills in an episode broadcast in 2004 . The 2005 film Green Street (known as Green Street Hooligans in the USA) makes use of action sequences filmed during a match between Gillingham and West Ham United , although for unknown reasons the dialogue states that the team playing West Ham is Birmingham City . A film entitled The Shouting Men , released in March 2010 , centres on a group of Gillingham fans and features scenes shot at Priestfield .