

HISTORY OF T&MUFC

THE BLACK & WHITE STRIPES

Tooting and Mitcham F.C. were formed in 1932 when two clubs who were local rivals decided to amalgamate, the idea being discussed for the first time at a Christmas London League match in 1930.

Tooting Town originated in 1887 as Tooting Graveney F.C. The first ground was at Figges Marsh, but in 1905 the Club moved to an enclosed ground at Lonesome. This was unsatisfactory so in 1907 another enclosed ground was obtained called "The North Surrey Poultry Farm" in Gorringe Park. In 1913 came another move, this time to a ground in The Ridgeway, beside the railway line. Then came the First World War and in 1915, after a club now called Tooting had tried to continue a Metropolitan League with Old Kingstonians, South Tooting, Summerston, West Norwood and Wimbledon, attempts to carry on were abandoned and the players joined a munitions firm called Darraq for the duration.

During this period the Club had absorbed, by amalgamation, Tooting Bee F.C. in 1896 and Balham St Johns in 1902 and many successes were achieved. These included the South Western Cup 1897, Champions of the Clapham League in 1898 and 1900, winners of the Crossley Charity Cup in 1907 (beating Dulwich Hamlet) and winners Sutton Hospital Cup in 1908 and 1909. But in the 1914-15 season came the ultimate success when the Club was elected to the Athenian League and indeed, one game was played-a draw of 2-2- with Luton Clarence before hostilities suspended the league.

In 1919, at the cessation of hostilities, the Club revived with the name Tooting Town, a ground (two pitches) were rented at Tyrell's Poultry Farm, and admission regained to the South Suburban League. Success came easily and in 1921 the Club was accepted into the London League and efforts made to secure a ground of their own.

A fund was started with half the Club's balance-£5-, but a town meeting and other efforts soon raised the fund to £1,000 including loans. Having failed to purchase a site on the Cassiot estate, the Sandy Lane site was purchased in February 1922. (The ground was an unfenced agricultural field). The next ten years consisted hard work on the ground and moderate success on the field, including victory in the Surrey Senior Shield in 1928. Throughout this time the Town team played in the London League as did their neighbours over the other side of the fence, Mitcham Wanderers.

It soon became obvious that two first class amateur sides could go no further existing side by side in competition, yet those who remembered the Christmas games between the two clubs could see how difficult amalgamation, the only answer, would be.

London House was formed in 1904 by Chief Spt G Siviour and Steve Taylor as the team for the London House business, belonging to the Francis family. The club lasted for two seasons, playing only friendlies, before being renamed Mitcham Athletic, who played in

the Balham league for two seasons before joining the Wimbledon League for another two years before disbanding.

Mitcham Wanderers were formed in 1912 in "Erns Coffee Shop" off Mitcham Cricket Green, and home matches were played in Cranmer Green. The Club closed down during the 1914-18 war and on resuming came near to purchasing Park Place, but it was not until 1922 that the site in Streatham Road was purchased. In 1922 they entered the Premier Division of the London League, being champions in 1929 and runners-up in 1930. Other successes were:

- 1920, Winners Surrey Junior Cup (beating Carshalton Athletic)
- 1922, Finalists Surrey Intermediate Cup (losing to Carshalton Athletic)
- 1927, Finalists Surrey Senior Shield (losing to Wimbledon)
- 1930, Finalists, Surrey Senior Shield (losing to Kingstonians)
- 1931, Finalists, Surrey Senior Cup (losing to Kingstonians).

In spite of its success, the Club, like its neighbours from Tooting felt the need for amalgamation which was effected in 1932, although there were many matters to be settled among these old rivals.

On amalgamation Tooting & Mitcham United remained in the London League but moved upwards into the Athenian League in 1937. Although their League form was disappointing it was compensated for by a first win in the Surrey Senior Cup in 1938 when Dulwich Hamlet were beaten 2-1 at Selhurst Park. Wartime then brought a mixture of friendlies and League competition in the South East Combination. In 1943 the club won the London Senior Cup for the first time when they defeated Dulwich Hamlet 5-4 at Millwall. Tooting have also lifted the trophy in 1949, 1959 and 1960. The Surrey Senior Cup has been won eight times including a hat-trick of successes between 1976 and 1978 (the first time this has ever been achieved).

By the 1956-57 season, Tooting & Mitcham Utd had been elected to the Isthmian League (currently known as the Ryman League) and to coincide with that they changed their shirts to the black and white stripes of one of their predecessors, Tooting Town. That season also saw the club reach the Second Round of the F.A. Cup for the first time, losing at home to Queens Park Rangers and in the 1957-58 season they were crowned Isthmian League Champions for the first time.

Season 1958-59 saw what was possibly the club's most notable (if not longest) run to date in the FA Cup when they reached the 3rd round for the first time in their history, beating Football League Clubs Bournemouth and Northampton Town in the First and Second Rounds.

In the third round they were drawn at home to First Division Nottingham Forest and led 2-0 at half-time. However an own goal and a highly controversial penalty for handball enabled Forest to scramble a draw. **To see a video clip of the match click [here](#).**

In the replay, played in front of a crowd of 42,362, the Midlands side won 3-0 and they went on all the way to lift the F.A. Cup at Wembley.

The 1959-60 campaign was possibly the club's most successful in its history. The Isthmian League Championship was won for the second time and the Terrors reached four Cup-Finals, winning two of them. They won both the London Senior Cup and Surrey Senior Cup and became the first amateur side to reach the London Challenge Cup Final for over 30 years, losing 2-1 to Chelsea in the Final at Stamford Bridge.

The end of that season also saw recognition for the club's most prolific striker of that era. Paddy Hasty, already an Irish amateur international, was selected to play for Great Britain at the 1960 summer Olympics and became the last player to score for a GB football team until 2012.

The next landmark in the club's history came in March 1962 when they switched on their newly installed floodlights. In a game set up to celebrate the event, an Arsenal side containing a number of recognisable names from their First Team was beaten 4-2.

The following season the club recorded its largest ever win, 11-0 against Welton Rovers in the FA Amateur Cup, the Tooting team of that era containing several England Amateur Internationals. The team's young goalkeeper of the time, Alex Stepney, was a local lad who had come through the Tooting ranks having started in the Colts' side. At the end of the 1962-63 campaign he went on to join Millwall (initially as an amateur on dual registration whilst also playing for Tooting), before a brief spell at Chelsea followed by a career defining move to Manchester Utd. Alex had an illustrious career at Old Trafford where he also became a full England international.

From 1970s and into the new Millennium

The next success for Tooting & Mitcham came in the 1974-75 season when once again the club reached the F.A. Cup first round and had a dream home tie with fellow South Londoners Crystal Palace, managed at the time by the flamboyant Malcolm Allison. Tooting took a first minute lead but the Eagles hit back to win 2-1 in front of a 10,000 plus crowd at Sandy Lane.

The following season the club under the guidance of Roy Dwight (uncle of Reginald Dwight, aka Elton John, and coincidentally a member of the 1959 Nottingham Forest side that came so close to defeat at Sandy Lane) had their best ever run in the F.A. Cup, reaching the 4th round for the first, and so far, only time in the club's history.

Victories against Romford and Leatherhead saw the Terrors drawn away to Third Division Swindon Town in the Third Round where they soon found themselves 2-0 down. However a dramatic late comeback saw Tooting snatch an unlikely draw.

In the replay at a packed Sandy Lane Tooting ran out 2-1 winners.

In the Fourth round Tooting were drawn away again and faced a long trip to Bradford City where despite a brave performance they lost 3-1. That same season, the club also had their best ever run in the F.A. Trophy losing 1-0 in the quarter-finals to the eventual winners Scarborough.

The 1970s also saw Tooting become the first club to win the Surrey Senior Cup three seasons in succession, lifting the trophy in 1976, 1977 and 1978.

New beginnings

In 2002, after many years of financial frustrations and setbacks the club were left with little option but to sell their Sandy Lane home to developers and move into a purpose built stadium at Imperial Fields for the start of the 2002-03 season. However despite the new surroundings further financial difficulties beset the club and by 2005 are only able to continue as a result of being taken on by its current owners, Tooting & Mitcham Sports and Leisure Ltd.

After going close to promotion in 2005-06, losing to Tonbridge in the Play-offs, manager Richard Cadette was replaced by the hugely experienced Billy Smith (who was skipper of Tooting's 1975-76 F.A. Cup side) and George Wakeling.

In the duo's first season, the Club won both the London Senior Cup and the Surrey Senior Cup and an unbeaten league run which began at the turn of the year saw the club finish just one point behind league champions Maidstone United.

After beating Fleet Town in the play-off semi-final they faced Hastings United in a home final. Sadly this proved one game too far for The Terrors as Hastings United ran out 2-0 winners. However, the 2007-08 season would see Tooting reach the Play-off Final again and this time there was no slip up as a Paul Vines goal resulted in a 1-0 victory over Cray Wanderers in the final and welcome return to the Isthmian League top flight after a gap of 19 years in a season that also saw the club retain the London Senior Cup.

At the same time, a future star who had worked his way through the club's junior teams was emerging and making a name for himself in both the club's youth and reserve teams and after just a handful of first team appearances a young Michail Antonio was snapped up by Championship side Reading.

After being signed by Reading he subsequently moved to Sheffield Wednesday and then Nottingham Forest before making his big money move in 2015 to West Ham United. Michail also got his first call up for England in 2018.

In 2009-10 the club reached the First Round of the F.A. Cup again for the first time since the mid 70s. The reward for their win over Conference side Eastbourne Borough in the final qualifying round was an away trip to struggling League Division one side, Stockport County. Despite their best efforts Tooting could do little on the day to prevent the full timers running out 5-0 winners.

The management duo of Billy Smith and George Wakeling decided to call it a day at the end of that season and were replaced by former Millwall star Mark Beard. After a

mediocre first season and a poor start to the 2011–12 season, Mark was relieved of his duties in December 2011.

Along with some new investment, former West Ham United player Kenny Brown was brought in to try and steady the ship. However, as many players came and went the results went from bad to worse and Tooting were relegated once again after just 4 seasons back in the Isthmian League Premier Division.

The following season saw a succession of managers (Roberto Forzoni, Jamie Martin and Phil Simpson) none of whom were able to turn the club's fortunes around. After narrowly avoiding another relegation, former captain Craig Tanner was appointed manager for the 2013-14 season at the age of just 27.

In his first season, Tooting finished in 11th position, repeating this the following season and also reaching the final of the London Senior Cup, losing 3-2 after extra time to Hendon. Despite this it was decided that further change was required if the club were to progress which led to Tanner not being re-engaged for the following season.

This saw the appointment of former Reserve Team Manager Frank Wilson for the start of the 2015-16 season along with former player Mark Hams as his assistant. This experiment though did not last long and after a series of poor results Mark Hams opted to end the partnership and stepped down from his role 3 months into the season. Wilson then brought in Paul Dale, Head Coach of the British Army FA, who had just left Godalming Town, to assist him.

Despite some much improved performances during the latter part of the season the side struggled to convert those performances into victories, finishing the season in 17th position in the league despite only accumulating one point fewer than had been achieved the season before. The season finished on a high however as the team went one step further than 12 months previously by defeating Ryman Premier League side Hendon by 2 goals to nil at Imber Court to win the London Senior Cup for the 7th time, having beaten two other Ryman Premier League sides en route to the final

In 2017-18 season would be a hugely disappointing one, with the club in the lower reaches of the table for the majority of the campaign. With only one team being relegated, it was hoped that Tooting & Mitcham could get out of trouble but it was not meant to be and our Premier Division status was ended as Burgess Hill pipped us on goal difference. At the end of the season, the club parted company with manager Frank Wilson.

For the 2019/19 season, the club appointed Ashley Bosah and Cornelius Nwadiakor as joint first team managers with Jordan Wilson taking a dual role of assistant manager and first team coach/player. The new management team had previously overseen the club's highly successful under 23s side and had a growing reputation of producing exceptional home-grown talent. This was a good foresight by the club as attendances improved, there were many Football League scouts at Tooting & Mitcham games, there was a general feeling of togetherness within the club. After a cautious start to the campaign, the team put in some tremendous performances going on several unbeaten runs which saw them challenging for a play-off place, however sadly the club missed out but there were many encouraging signs for all to see that the future was bright at the club.

The Terrors also made it to the Surrey Senior Cup final but went down 2 nil to the Metropolitan Police. During the campaign, young players Isaiah Jones, Abraham Odoh and Sam Folarin all left to join Championship clubs on professional deals. A week before the new season, the club also saw 19 year old centre half Lexus Beeden sign a professional deal with Reading Football club. This was further proof that the club was in very safe hands and the management team will again be at the helm for the 2019/20 season.