

History of Pontardawe Town AFC

Although the present club was founded in 1947, football in Pontardawe certainly stretches back over 100 years, into the closing years of the 19th Century, when a Pontardawe club, run by industrialist CF Gilbertson, was among the members of the earliest Swansea League, and won the championship in 1899-1900. The club went on to join the Swansea and District League in the early 1900s, playing familiar names like Swansea Town, Morryston, Skewen and Clydach, as well as long forgotten ones such as Mond Nickel, York Place and Sketty. But honours don't seem to have come their way in the first half of the 20th Century; the club never even reached the top division of the Welsh League and it disbanded during the Second World War.

Reformed as Pontardawe Athletic in 1947, the town club entered the Welsh League, playing in division two (west). The first few post war years brought reasonable success at this level and by 1959/60 they were challenging for promotion, finishing 3rd behind Carmarthen and Clydach, achieving a Division One place a year later despite finishing below Gelli Colliery. But relegation came swiftly in 1961-62, Ponty finishing 19th out of 20 and going back down with Milford. By the mid 1960s the club was struggling in the middle section of the restructured Welsh League and by 1980 they dropped to the lowest division.

A period of comparative success followed in the early 1980s, with successive promotions taking the club back to the top flight of the Welsh League by 1982. 1981 / 82 was Ponty's best ever season - not only did Dixie McHale's team win promotion, finishing second to Brecon Corries but they reached the quarter finals of the Welsh Cup, hosting a Wrexham side containing Dai Davies, Joey Jones and Dixie McNeil. (Record books show the result as 5-1 though the club's history says 4-1). The 1982 team contained well known names such as Neil Frederickson, and was captained by Robert Cooke, both of whom have been part of the management team until this season.

Competing in the Premier Division for only the second time in their history in 1982-83, Pontardawe Athletic managed to lift the West Wales Senior Cup - their only major honour to date - and in the league they held their own, finishing 13th - but luck wasn't on their side, the league restructured and as Athletic lacked a ground adequate for the Welsh league's self styled "National Division" they were dumped back into the middle section, curiously known as the Premier Division, for 1983/84. Ponty went into decline again, slipping back to the third level of the Welsh league by the mid-1980s, quietly remaining there for over a decade.

The first Welsh league championship - of the Third division - finally came in 1996, after 50 years of membership but the club's progress up the league was almost halted on ground criteria again, as council bureaucracy meant Pontardawe were one of the last clubs at this level to erect a covered stand. But the club was now on a definite upward curve, its youth side lifting the Welsh Youth Cup and MacWhirter League title in 1997, and the senior side gaining promotion to the First Division in 1998. This time the club (now adopting the name of Pontardawe Town) lasted more than one season, finishing 6th, 14th, 6th, 2nd and 10th before being relegated in 17th place. The club returned to the top flight for the 2005-06 season after winning the Second Division and losing to Goytre

in the Shamrock League Cup final. Their return to the First division saw them finish third in the table and again finishing runners up in the Shamrock League Cup, this time losing to Penrhiwceiber after extra time.

Today we are in a strong position. We welcomed back Steve Price a couple of years with his new management team and the whole club is doing fantastically well finishing top 10 in the last three seasons. The much loved Peter James passed away in 2009 and the Reserve's league win in 2009/2010 a fitting tribute to Peter. This was followed up by the Reserves winning the Classic Sportswear Cup in 2010/2011. Also last season the newly formed Neath League side won the Division Two Title.

The Youth are progressing well with Under 19s and Under 18s. The Under 19s won the Welsh League Youth Division West title in 2010/2011.

Also important is the Junior Section which is one of the best in the country running over 20 teams including minis, juniors and girls / ladies. The trophy cabinets are bursting at the seams and long may this continue.

Progress on the field has been matched by ambition behind the scenes. The club runs on a sound business footing - with a social club of its own at the Gilbertson Suite in the town.

But Ponty's Achilles heel remains the ground facilities at the Recreation Ground. Basic for even Welsh League standards, the club has been negotiating with Neath & Port Talbot Council for the last 12 years to develop its ground. The club finally looks to have made progress after agreeing to lease an area of land at the nearby leisure centre which is currently being developed so we live in hope of being in our new home soon Watch this space !!

Pontardawe Town Player Profiles

Steve Reeve (Keeper) : Steve joined us during last season from the Neath League and made an immediate impression at this level.

Luke Harris (Defence) : Luke is a product of our Junior and Youth setup and returned home to Pontardawe last season after 2 successful seasons up in Ammanford.

Antonio Facciuto (Defence) : Antonio joined us from Carmarthen Town last season and added an extra dimension on the left hand side of the field.

Jack Jenkins (Defence) : Jack has a wealth of Welsh League experience having began his career at Briton Ferry as well as spells at Garden Village, Morriston Town & Afan Lido. In 2007, he made the step up to the Welsh Premier with Neath FC and was an ever present in the side over the next two seasons. Jack has a great left foot and likes to get forward from his left back position, he is also comfortable in the centre of defence.

Steve Lewis (Defence) : Lewy returns to the club after a short break with Sunnybank AFC. A solid and uncompromising defender who is very comfortable at this level

Gareth Govier (Defence / Midfield) : Gareth featured for the first team many times last season and will be

looking to become a regular during this campaign. A big and strong lad with a sweet right foot

Kieran Hayes (Defence / Midfield): Kieran joined us last season from Carmarthen Town with an excellent reputation. He has suffered from injuries but with a clean bill of health he is looking like getting back to his best.

Christian Evans (Defence / Midfield): Another product of the Youth setup, Christian is another who has excellent ability and who will be looking to become a regular in the first team squad this season.

Will James (Midfield)– Will joins us from South Gower and will be keen to prove himself at this level. He has shown us glimpses of his ability and we are sure he will be a success.

Kieran Howells (Midfield) : Kieran has a wealth of experience at this level and is a robust and energetic midfielder with a big engine.

Luke Borrelli (Midfield / Forward) : Luke joined us from Afan Lido last season although spent some time here as a youngster. He has a great left foot and speed to match and comes up with some spectacular goals.

Andrew Stokes (Midfield / Forward) : Stokesy has been around many years and is Ponty through and through. His goal celebrations last year were too few and far between so we will be looking for more from him this campaign.

Arwel Rees (Midfield / Forward) : Arwel is a product of the Mini, Junior and Youth section here at Pontardawe and it is great to see him become an integral part of the first team.

Pete Ockwell (Don't Know Yet) : Pete has recently joined us as he is studying at the local University ... this means our team's IQ level has shot up !!!

Tom Blizzard (Midfield / Forward) : An outstanding prospect from the Youth squad who pitches in with his fair share of spectacular goals

Garry Taylor (Midfield) - He couldn't stay away could he? ... Garry has returned to the club after his holiday in West Wales. A great asset to the club as ever due to his midfield prowess and the good news is that Garry is also working with our Youth team

Jon Coates (Everywhere!!) : Great touch, great vision and great skill ... but less about Lee Brown ... Jon is a former Swansea City pro who has a great appetite for the game and was one of our stars last season

Chris Allen (Forward) : Chris hit some good form last season and has carried this through into the pre-season games. Fast and skillful he is sure to continue to terrorize some of the division's best this season.

James Pickup (Forward) : This is James's third season with us and he is a big, strong attacker who likes to get into defender's faces. James will be looking to get more game time this season and bag a few goals in the process.

Josh Roberts (Forward) : Josh has broken through to the First team squad at a very young age but has already shown he is ready for this level was some confident performances.

Josh Dorward (Forward) – Last season's Reserve Cup Final Man of the Match, Josh is still a young lad and is a member of our Youth squad. He has great skill and pace with a mean strike as well

Daniel Lancey (Forward) – Daniel joins us from Garden Village and is a quick and skillful forward who will definitely be giving a few defenders headaches this season.

Scott McCoubrey (Forward) : Former Wales Under-19 international who was with Cardiff City as a youth and played in the Welsh Youth Cup final before being released from Ninian Park. Joined Port Talbot Town and has since played for Gowerton Juniors, signing for Afan Lido in the summer of 2008. Played for Hamilton FC in the American Premier Development League in 2010/11.

The Management Team

Steve Price (Manager) : Steve has a great passion for the game and for Pontardawe Town. His commitment and drive is infectious and his phone bill must be massive Our Clubman of the Year in 2010/2011.

Jason Dykes (Coach) : Dykesy is involved with both First Team and Youth Team coaching as well as the Academy side of Ponty. An excellent coach who is rather particular about his balls !

Lee Brown (Coach) : Lee is in his fourth year back at the club and last year got back playing and he claims he showed these youngsters a thing or two !!!

Marcus Evans (Coach) : Marcus was part of the successful reserve coaching team last season and has joined the first team setup this year. His team talks are somewhat straight to the point ... enough said!

Gary Thomas (First Aid) : Hasn't got a clue really ... just throw some water on it, get up and stop whining! ... this policy worked so far this season !