

## Hythe Town FC Club History

Hythe Town Football Club was formed in August 1910 although football in Hythe can be traced back into the previous century. The club joined the Folkestone and District Leagues and after the First World War had some success with four championships and only once outside the top three in fourteen seasons. They moved up into the Kent Amateur League in 1936 and were promoted into Division One before the Second World War intervened. The 50s and 60s saw little league success but that changed in the early 70s under manager Bob Davis with three successive league titles and a Kent Junior Cup win. Hythe were granted senior status and elected into the Kent League in 1977, playing at the newly acquired Reachfields, a former army sports ground on the edge of the town's firing ranges. The club were runners-up in the Kent League on three occasions. When property developer Tony Walton took over Hythe Town in February 1988 there was a rapid rise on and off the pitch.

That summer saw the ground developed to Southern League standard with new seating and a social club, with viewing balconies, above new dressing rooms. Standing cover extended behind one goal and for the whole of the far side, and floodlights were installed. The ground capacity still remains at 3,000 with the majority under cover. The chairman proved to be a high-profile character who attracted much media attention with his high spending on the ground and team. Town won the 1988/9 Kent League title by 14 points and set a league record of 133 goals. The club moved up into the Southern League.

The next season saw another promotion as the main aim, but the club's great run to the FA Vase semi-finals handicapped their league ambitions, with four games a week at times, and a sixth-place finish. Hythe lost out to the eventual Vase winners Yeading, winning the home leg 3-2 in front of the club's record attendance of 2,147, but losing the second leg 2-0 with the crucial goal coming from a big deflection. Hythe did have one trophy success, winning the Eastern Professional Floodlight Cup at their first attempt.

The following season was very similar, topping the table in November but runs in four cups again caused fixture congestion and a final placing of eighth. Hythe lost out to Trowbridge Town in a Vase quarter-final second replay, lost to Chelmsford City over two legs in the Southern League Cup final, but won the Kent Senior Trophy and retained the Eastern Professional Floodlight Cup. The club played 40 league games and 33 cup ties.

In 1991/2 Hythe again topped the table in the early months but the money was beginning to run out. With little cup success, the exit from the Vase at Evesham United in February saw many of the team sold and their replacements could only finish thirteenth. The club did reach the final of the Kent Senior Cup, losing in extra-time to Bromley at Gillingham's Priestfield Stadium. That match proved to be Walton's last game, and he put the club into liquidation soon after.

Supporters rallied round and entered a scratch side, as Hythe United, into the following season's Kent County League and negotiated continued use of Reachfields Stadium. After three seasons the club regained senior status and in 1995 were elected back into the Kent League. The early seasons saw the club struggle in the wrong half of the table. In 2001 Hythe dropped the "United" suffix, reverting to "Town" and in November 2002 appointed Paul Fisk as manager. This proved a turning point and Hythe became a regular top-six Kent League club.

Season 2007/8 saw Hythe top of the table in March but fall away to finish fourth. The highlight was a fantastic FA Cup win over Andy Hessenthaler's Dover Athletic before a crowd of 1,109 at Reachfields, and achieving the important Ryman League ground grading.

The club achieved the runners-up spot the following season and then Scott Porter, who had been Paul Fisk's assistant, took over as manager for the 2009/10 season with Clive Cook as his number two. There was a third-place finish in the league and another good FA Cup performance, holding Woking to a draw at Reachfields before losing the replay in Surrey.

The 2010/11 season was possibly the most successful in the history of the club, with Porter leading the side to the Kent League Championship for the first time in over twenty years and promotion to the Ryman League. After a 22-match unbeaten run in the new year, dropped points over Easter took the championship to the wire and the league title was clinched in dramatic fashion on the final day of the season thanks to a last-minute equaliser at Tunbridge Wells. Brendan Cass won the Kent League Golden Boot.

This fine achievement was coupled with the club's best ever F.A. Cup run, and the best for any Kent League side since the 1950s. Hythe negotiated their way through six rounds, including memorable wins over higher-league opposition at Concord Rangers of the Ryman Premier and at home to Staines Town of the Blue Square Bet South. The prize was an away draw in the First Round Proper to League Two side Hereford United. It was one round too far on the pitch, the hosts comfortably winning 5-1 with Gary Mickelborough getting the Hythe goal.

During the 2011/2 season the club maintained their progress and finished in eighth place in Ryman Division One South. Hythe were also able to get their hands on some silverware as wins over Ebbsfleet United and Dover Athletic were followed by a single goal victory in the final at Dartford to lift the Kent Senior Cup. The following season ended with a 17-match unbeaten run and a fourth-place finish. This brought about the club's first play-off appearance but there was defeat at Faversham Town in the semi-final. Dave Cook scored 28 goals in total and won the Ryman One South Golden Boot.

After another eighth-place finish Porter and Cook left the club at the end of 2013/4. Tim Dixon was appointed as the new manager, but it was a disappointing season that saw Hythe finish in sixteenth position. After a poor start to 2015/6 the club parted company with Dixon in September. Clive Cook returned to take over, this time as manager and led a remarkable turnaround from the relegation places to finish fourth as the club qualified for the Ryman One South play-offs for a second time. Defeat followed at Worthing in the semi-final.

Alfie May's 49 goals in 65 Hythe appearances from September 2015 to December 2016 attracted the attention of League Two Doncaster Rovers, who signed him in January 2017. He played there for three years before moving to his current club, Cheltenham Town, in January 2020.

Hythe parted company with Cook in January 2017 and appointed ex-Herne Bay manager Sam Denly in his place. The club finished in seventh place, six points outside the play-offs. The following season, 2017/8, saw Hythe unbeaten in the last 14 games but missing the play-offs on goal difference. Only drawing on the last day of the season was the difference, and seventh place again.

In 2018/9 Hythe again claimed seventh position but this time a distant eleven points from the play-offs. Zak Ansah scored 32 goals during the season and won the Ryman One South Golden Boot. A poor start to the following season resulted in the departure of Denly, to be replaced by Steve Watt in September 2019. The season was brought to a premature end due to the Covid-19 pandemic with Hythe in eleventh position after 29 games. The 2020/1 season hardly started, with Hythe eighth after only six matches when it was curtailed. The club looks forward to a new and hopefully uninterrupted season. Steve Watt did leave during 2021-22 to be replaced by James Rogers who saw us safe from relegation, but Steve returned at the start of last season to take the reins again. 2022-2023 ended with an Isthmian League South-East Play off final when Whitehawk piped the Cannons to a place in the Premier Division.

2023/2024 saw a great start to the season with a fantastic run in the FA Trophy when Hythe got to the fourth round where they were beaten 2-1 at home to National League North Chorley. However, things tailed off towards the end of the season and Steve Watt resigned and Sammy Moore replaced him as manager. Former Sheppey Chairman Matthew Smith joined during the summer of 2024 to take the helm. Sammy Moore resigned after the first league game of 2024/2025 to be replaced by former Sittingbourne, Ramsgate and VCD Athletic manager Nick Davis.

There was further change in the summer when Matthew Smith handed the reins over to Andy Nanda towards the end of the season with a number of new directors joining the board. Relegation had already been confirmed and one of Andy's first tasks was to replace Nick Davis with young manager Ira Jackson to take the club forward in the Southern Counties East Premier League Division.

**Ground details** - Capacity 3,000 (2,400 under cover) - Record attendance: 2,147 (March 1990, versus Yeading, F.A. Vase semi-final)

#### **Hythe Town FC Honours Board**

Kent League Champions – 1988/89, 2010/11  
Kent League Runners-Up – 1978/79, 1982/ 83, 1984/ 85, 2008/09  
Kent League Cup Runners-Up – 1987/88, 2007/08, 2010/11  
Southern League Cup Runners-Up – 1990/91  
Kent Senior Cup Winners - 2011/12  
Kent Senior Cup Runners-Up – 1991/92  
Kent Senior Trophy Winners – 1990/91  
Kent Senior Trophy Runners-Up – 2003/04  
Eastern Professional Cup Winners - 1989/90, 1990/91  
F.A. Cup - First Round Proper - 2010/11  
F.A. Vase - Semi-final - 1989/90  
FA Trophy – Fourth Round 2023/2024  
Isthmian League Division One South Play-Offs – 2012/13, 2015/16, 2023/24