



## Looking Back In Amber: The History of Cheshunt Football Club

Since 2011, Cheshunt FC has been Cheshunt Sports & Leisure Ltd, with Dean Williamson, our chairman, guiding our club and premises' development. Major investment on and off the pitch has been a major feature of the past few years, with extensive refurbishment of our stadium and entertainment facilities and the construction of new grass pitches and the amazing new 3G surface.

Our vision is to produce a Conference standard football club and academy, together with first-class sports, leisure and business facilities that will support Cheshunt Football Club's desire to become a centre of sporting excellence.

Cheshunt Football Club club has a rich history, which has made it a part of the town's heritage and culture. Below we look over the club's history throughout the decades.

### 1880s – 1930s – The Original Cheshunt Football Club

The original Cheshunt Football Club was formed in around 1880, just 17 years after the FA codified the laws of football. They played at Cheshunt Cricket Club's Recreation ground on Albury Ride and wore a black and white striped kit.

Their main achievements include winning the Herts Senior Cup in 1924 and the Herts Charity Cup in 1900/01, 1903/04 and 1905/06. They reached the FA Amateur Cup semi-final in 1903/04 and joined the Athenian league after the Great War.

After finishing bottom four seasons on the trot and heavily in debt, they disbanded in 1931 when the cricket club raised the rent. At the time they were the oldest amateur club in Hertfordshire.



### **1940s – The ‘New’ Cheshunt Football Club**

In July 1946, at a public meeting in the Co-op Hall in Waltham Cross, a group of local businessmen decided to resurrect the club, using local junior side Crossbrook Sports as the basis for the new team, retaining their amber and black colours and with Roy Bailey as their manager.

The new club applied for and were accepted into the London League, playing in division one for the 1946-47 season. They finished runners-up and won the League Cup and Herts Charity Shield.

Initially, home games were played at the Gothic sports ground, off Theobalds Lane, east of the Great Cambridge Road, before moving to College Road the following season.

Cheshunt then won the division one title in 1947/48 and again in 1948/49 season and reached the Herts Senior Cup final for the first time. The 1949/50 season saw us in the London League Premier division and playing at our newly opened Cheshunt Stadium on Theobalds Lane. We won the championship – beating Tilbury on the last day of the season to clinch the title from them – and reached the 3rd round of the Amateur Cup, defeating holders Bromley in front of 5,000 spectators (still the ground record) along the way.

### **1950s – Searching for Success**

Drainage problems forced the club to abandon Cheshunt Stadium and move to a new ground on Brookfield Lane. We returned to ‘The Stadium’ (as it is often referred to) in 1952/53 but a poor playing surface meant a return to Brookfield Lane, this time as the tenants of Tottenham Hotspur, as Spurs were now using it as their training ground. At the end of the 1957/58 season Cheshunt were asked to leave and so returned to Cheshunt Stadium where we have played to this present day.

The side that won the London League in 1950 included many talented players, including Arthur Ault, Fred Pointing and Dudley Sapsford, but most notable were Ralph Wetton, who went on to play for Tottenham Hotspur, and George Ferguson, who was selected to play for Scotland’s Amateur side twice in 1950 – the only man to play in an international whilst a Cheshunt player.

Apart from moving grounds, Cheshunt also moved around various leagues. We were members of the Delphian League from 1951/52 and 1954/55, rejoined the London League between 1955/56 and 1958/59 and then left to become founder members of the Aetolian League between 1959/60 and 1961/2... all without achieving any notable success. In 1957/58 our team reached the FA Cup 4th qualifying round for the first time. It’s an achievement the club has matched three times since, but never bettered.



### **1960s – Ambitions Achieved**

Cheshunt joined the Spartan League for the 1962/63 season and won the title at the first attempt. The following season the team won the Spartan League Cup.

For the 1964/65 season, Cheshunt joined the Athenian League, playing in division two. The following season we finished runners-up under the management of Terry Medwin, the former Spurs and Wales international. That same year, we lifted the Herts Charity Shield. The division one title was won in 1967/68, beating Wembley in another head-to-head championship decider. We joined the Premier Division in the 1968/69 season and achieved respectable positions right through to winning the Athenian Championship in the 1975/76 season, guided by the club's most successful manager, John Drabwell.

### **1970s – The Golden Years**

Cheshunt's time in the Premier Division saw the Club's most successful period since the 1940s. We won the Mithras Cup in 1969/70, the London Charity Cup in 1973/74, the Athenian League Cup and East Anglian Cup in 1974/75 and the Athenian League Cup again in 1975/76. We also reached four Herts Senior Cup finals, two Mithras Cup finals as well as another East Anglian Cup and Herts Charity Cup finals.

It was during this period that Cheshunt saw Eddie Sedgwick chalk up the club record for goals (148) and John Poole began his run of record appearances (512). The team also welcomed former Spurs player Mike Dillon in the mid-1970s.



CHESHUNT FC LONDON CHARITY CUP WINNERS 1974

Back Row - John Drabwell (Manager), Stephen Kell, George Bennett, Colin Waters, Jeff Miles, John Walton, Tony D'Arcy  
Front Row - John Poole, David O'Neill, Colin Hyde, John Emmett, Denis Bailey, David Cooper

### **1980s – Highs and Lows**

Cheshunt joined the Isthmian League Division Two in 1977/78. We found little success until the 1981/82 season, when we finished runners-up to Worthing and were promoted to division one. We also reached the last eight of the FA Vase, going out to Wearside Club Blue Star in the quarter-final, Cheshunt's best performance in any national competition. Cheshunt were relegated from division one at the end of 1983/84 season. However, this was the time when a young Iain Dowie first appeared for the Ambers, before leaving to play for Luton, West Ham, Southampton and Northern Ireland and then going on to manage Crystal Palace, Charlton Athletic and Coventry City. Paul Fairclough, once manager of Barnet, also played a few games for the Ambers in the early 80s.

In 1986/87 Cheshunt were relegated into the Spartan League and spent the next six seasons in a state of persistent frustration, unable to achieve the consistency needed for

promotion. We did, however, pick up the Herts Centenary Trophy in 1991/92 and finally finished in a top three place in 1992/93, along with the Spartan League Cup, which was a good enough performance to go back up into the Isthmian League.

### **1990s – Hovering on the Brink**

Cheshunt rejoined division three of the Isthmian League for the 1993/94 season and achieved promotion to division two at the first attempt.

The club was relegated to division three in 1997/98, but bounced back immediately the following season. We consolidated with mid-table positions until being effectively relegated to the new division two at the end of the 2001/02 season due to League restructuring and ground improvements not meeting League deadlines.

### **2000s- Silverware and Security**

In season 2002/03, Cheshunt won the division two title (our first league title for 27 years), reached three cup finals and also achieved the necessary ground-grading to play at a higher level. Success continued in the 2003/04 season, finishing third in division one north and reaching the final of the Herts Charity Cup.

During this season, striker Darrell Cox was selected for Grenada's squad in their World Cup qualifying tie with Guyana. Sadly, Cox spent the match on the substitutes' bench and was not brought on. This is the nearest Cheshunt have come to producing a full international while still an active player for our club side.

With the FA restructuring of the non-league pyramid taking effect for the following season, Cheshunt were promoted to the Isthmian Premier division for 2004/05. We found ourselves relegated on the final day of the season by the narrowest of margins (identical points and goal difference with Wealdstone meant that they stayed above Cheshunt by virtue of having scored two more goals), only to then find we were saved due to the disbandment of Hornchurch that summer.

However, the Ambers were moved across into the Southern League, where we spent a memorable 2005/06 season (finishing two places above the relegation zone) and lifting the Herts Charity Cup for the first time in the club's history

During this season, Cheshunt signed Lloyd Opara from Redbridge, one of the best players in the Southern League. There were many rumours speculating about Opara, with tabloids reporting that he was on the verge of being snapped up by Chelsea for a cool £1 million. In reality, the club sold him to Peterborough United for an estimated £22,000. He went on to make 8 appearances in League Two and scored just 1 goal. Lloyd came back to Cheshunt on a free transfer in the latter stages of the 2006/07 season. We also re-signed striker Darrell Cox for a record transfer fee in the 2006/07 season.

2007/08 saw the club break plenty of records for all the wrong reasons. Five managers took up residence in the hot-seat: Tom Loizou (sacked in November), Paul McGiven (resigned in December), Justin Moseley (caretaker), Martin Grainger (resigned after 1 game in charge) and finally Gordon Boateng. Months of turmoil saw most of the senior players leave for pastures greener.

Relegation was all but assured by the time Boateng took charge of the team and the inevitable became a certainty at Easter when a 2-1 defeat at Banbury Utd sealed our fate. There was some cheer for Ambers fans when we beat local rivals Ware in the Herts Charity Cup Final by a Liam Farrell goal to put some silverware in the cabinet and give the club some hope for the future.

Cheshunt were placed in the Ryman Division 1 North for the 2008/09 season, finishing 14th and narrowly losing to Stevenage Borough in the Herts Senior Cup Final. The 2009/10 season saw a new squad, a new management team of Bob Dearie and Barry Green, and a more stable, supportive environment.

## 2010s – A Bright Future

In 2011 Cheshunt Sports & Leisure Ltd took over the Club with Dean Williamson installed as Chairman. Ensuring stability was the first priority along with investment in the facilities to build a solid foundation from which the club could grow.

In 2013, the club were granted planning permission to overhaul 16 acres of land to provide high quality playing surfaces, install a sustainable irrigation system and a full size floodlit artificial pitch. The permission gained national coverage in the BBC2 documentary “Permission Impossible”.

The following year, Dean Williamson secured £150,000 of funding from the Football Stadium Improvement fund to extensively refurbish the club’s stadium. In 2015, he secured a further £300,000 of Sport England funding to install the new 3G floodlit artificial pitch. The stadium and adjoining 3G pitch were completed in 2015, and the youth section now have a selection of eleven, nine and six/seven a side pitches with new drainage, a reservoir to collect water and a pump to maintain the surfaces.

2011 to 2018 saw the Ambers work with a succession of managers with varying degrees of success, but only the Herts FA Charity Cup to show, despite some promising periods there was a missing link the Committee sought to resolve.

In 2018 Craig Edwards joined the Ambers just in time to steer them clear of a relegation battle, promising promotion the following season. 2018/19 saw Edwards work with existing players and recruit skillfully in the newly formed Isthmian South Central division. A late run of ten wins and two draws from the last dozen games saw Cheshunt make third place and the play offs. Wins against Marlow at home 2-1 and relieving Bracknell Town of their two year old unbeaten home record 3-0 in the final saw Cheshunt back at Premier League level for season 2019/20.

Off the pitch the club remain optimistic plans submitted to further develop the Theobalds Lane ground will progress, to provide the club with a stable financial future and the community a first class sporting environment.

