

Joint second oldest original football club in Essex, Coggeshall Town was formed at a meeting held at the White Hart Hotel, Coggeshall on September 27th 1878. The official report of that meeting was published in Coggeshall Parish Magazine in October 1878 and reads as follows:

**“A meeting was held on Friday last 27th ult, at the White Hart Hotel for the purpose of forming a Football Club in this town. The chairman (Mr. G. F. Beaumont) announced that Mr. Hanbury had kindly consented to act as President to the club, and he was accordingly unanimously elected. The meeting next appointed Mr. G. F. Beaumont as Hon. Sec and the following gentlemen were chosen to form a Committee: The Rev. J. P. A. Bowers, Messrs. T. W. Haddon, A.T. Bremner, F. Beard, A. Judges, C. Poulton and J. Webster. Play is to commence on Saturday next, the 5th inst. At 3 o'clock punctually in Mynheer Park, kindly lent by Mr. T. C. Swinborne. The rules of the game may be obtained from the Secretary or any member of the Committee. It is hoped that the club may be strongly supported by players and non-players. The subscriptions for players is 1/- and for non-players 2/6d”.**

Records held at the Coggeshall Museum, suggest that the Football Club was founded by J. K. King & Sons, a local family seed business. The account of the inaugural meeting makes no mention of the company although its role may be acknowledged through the club's nickname, “The Seedgrowers” that remains to this day.

Coggeshall provided the first opposition for both Braintree F.C., in January 1879 and Halstead, in November of the same year. In 1880, at this time the traditional colours of Scarlet and Black were adopted. Abandoning the steep slope of Mynheer Park the 1880 - 81 season was played on Mr Fuller's Barnard Field in Pointwell Lane, Little Coggeshall, before spending the rest of the decade on the Highfields Farm Park. Then “Fabians” field in Colne Road was played on until 1895 when a permanent move to Highfields was made, this became the club's home for 65 years.

Coggeshall's early competitive football was in the Essex Junior Cup, in which they were losing finalists in 1898 - 99, before joining the North Essex League the following year. They won the N.E.L. four times and the Colchester & District League Division II B twice, becoming founder members of the Border League in 1911 -12. Always known as the “Town” team, after the Great War the club resumed as **Coggeshall Town**, although they played with a degree of success in the Braintree, Kelvedon and Halstead Leagues it was with the N.E.L. Division II that they really made their mark, increasing their titles to an amazing 14 times up to 1939. The post-war period became boom time for the club as they switched from the North Essex League to the Braintree and District League, before broadening their horizons in the fledgling Colchester and East Essex League, where their previous pedigree rewarded them with a Division 1 start in 1950—51. Runners up. A season later, they were promoted to the Premier Division and built up an impressive Supporter's Club with a membership in excess of 200. Long serving officials, Secretary, John Alston and Treasurer, Norman Burton, provided a sound administrative base.

The Club's ambitious committee, led by Chairman Lou Marks, then Tom Ritson were soon targeting the Border League as their next step up the football ladder, a goal they duly achieved in 1958—59. However, a shock awaited the Seedgrowers, when, in the summer of 1960, they were given notice to quit Highfields, their home for 65 years. Colonel F.t. Hill came to the rescue, first with an interim pitch at his Holfield Grange and then by offering the use of a bit of land behind the Cricket pitch at “The Crops”. Complete with a new pavilion, which is now the changing rooms. “The Crops” opened with a Coggeshall Brotherhood Cup -tie against Courtaulds in August 1961. The covered stand was added in 1964.

Now the Seedgrowers began to blossom, winning Division 1 in 1962-63 and under the manager ship of ex Colchester United player, Bob Dale the championship in 1966-67, Alf Marshall was in charge when they retained their title and won the Knock-Out Cup in 1968-69. Another former Colchester star, Derek Parker, led them to the Border League and Cup double, the Essex Intermediate Cup, 2- 0 v Great Wakering in 1970 -71. The clubhouse was added in 1971. From 1972 onwards, the club played in the Essex Senior League without winning any honours.

The club's future was threatened again in 1981 when the landowner announced that he wished to sell the land. Once more, the club embarked on a fundraising campaign. The commitment of those involved is evident from the efforts of the club manager, Peter Barlow, who embarked on a run from “The Crops” to F.A. Headquarters at Lancaster Gate to hand in an appeal for support to save the ground. A little behind schedule, he arrived at the F.A. to find it closed. Nevertheless, he raised £500 toward the fund. With the help of Coggeshall Parish Council and the Sports Council, the club raised the funding to buy the land and for the first time, just over 100 years since they were formed, Coggeshall Town owned their own facilities.

The Border League was again joined in 1990—91 followed by two spells in the Essex intermediate League which sandwiched a single season in Division IV of the Colchester and East Essex League. Since the last return to the Border League in 2000—01, the club has risen from Division III to the Premier Division and back to the first Division. Ivan Gooday was Manager when first losing 1—0 to Harwich and Parkeston in the 2011-12 League Cup Final and then winning promotion back to the Premier Division as runners up in 2012 -13.

The start of the 2013-14 season saw major changes at Coggeshall Town with the club accepting a proposal from local businessman Graeme Smith to become involved in running the club. Initially Smith's involvement was in an advisory role coupled with managing the reserve team, which he took over midway through that season, leading them on to winning the Essex and Suffolk Border League Reserve Cup and saving the team from relegation. During the remainder of that season Smith's influence at the club led to many improvements on and off the pitch. The 2014-15 season saw Graeme Smith take full control of the football club and become 1st team manager alongside his assistant and long-term friend John Pollard. During this season, significant improvements were made throughout

the whole club. On the pitch, the team secured a 6th place finish in the Border League Premier Division and were runners up in the League Cup final.

The 2015-16 season again saw many improvements to the newly named "West Street " ground. It was a very successful season on the pitch also with Smith and Pollard leading the team to the league and cup double securing promotion to the Eastern Counties League division one. 2016-17 saw floodlights installed at "West Street" for the first time in the clubs history, which meant the club met all the requirements to compete in the league above. The continued ground upgrading and success of the team on the pitch led to great interest in Coggeshall Town highlighted by an attendance of 1022 against a Ipswich Town X1 in a pre-season fixture. More evidence of the growing popularity of the club followed with attendances soaring throughout the season. The opening match under the new floodlights was another big attendance when Braintree Town Reserves were the visitors to West Street with the "Seedgrowers" recording a fine 6-1 victory. It was another tremendous season with the team again achieving promotion as runners up to take their place in the Eastern Counties League Premier Division for the start off the 2017-18 season.

For the 2017-18 season, Coggeshall Town lined up in the Eastern Counties League Premier Division for the first time in the clubs history. There was another major development at the club with pop star Olly Murs becoming joint owner of the club with Graeme Smith. Further ground improvements were carried out, with Smith and Murs overseeing a total refurb of the dressing rooms and Murs himself funding a complete transformation of the clubhouse inside and out which was well overdue. The facilities at the club were now ready for the team to move up another level and again the team did not disappoint winning the league at the first attempt by 6 points with a goal difference of + 116 scoring 146 league goals in the process. The last week of the season was an exciting one, with Coggeshall gaining two wins in five days against their nearest rivals for the title, Felixstowe who were 2<sup>nd</sup> and Stowmarket who were 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Away Match at Felixstowe, which was the title deciding game, played in front of a crowd of over 1541, with Coggeshall recording a 4-2 victory. This meant that the team achieved its third promotion in a row and moved up to step 4 of the football pyramid for the first time in their 140 year history as they took their place in The Isthmian League Division One North.

The 2018 – 19 season saw further development to the clubs facility's at West Street, as well as creating new records on the pitch. We were now playing in step 4 for the first time in the clubs History, as well as making our debut's in the F.A. Cup and the F.A. Trophy . A few additions to the squad were made which enabled us to have a good run in the F.A. Cup, finally losing 1 – 0 away to Weston-Super-Mare in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Round Qualifying. The good form was carried on throughout the season with the club making the play-offs finishing in 4<sup>th</sup> place, losing 1 – 0 away to Maldon & Tiptree in the semi-final.

The 2019 – 20 season was brought to an early close in March due to the Coronavirus pandemic; at this stage, the club had played eight Cup and twenty-six League games. With only four defeats in the league, Town were sitting in sixth place with games in hand over most of their closest rivals and looking in a strong position to make the play-offs for the second season running. Disappointingly, due to the unprecedented circumstances it did not happen.

The 2020 – 21 season. Due to the continued pandemic, the season got under way in September, which was later than usual. We had made some good summer signings and the squad was looking strong, with the hope of challenging for the play-offs again. However, after only 10 games, six League and 4 Cup on 31<sup>st</sup> October the season suspended due to the continued Coronavirus. In the hope of being able, to make restart, Clubs were allowed to keep training and at the beginning of December, we played three friendlies behind closed doors, but with the pandemic worsening the football season was cancelled.

The 2021 – 22 season, saw some enforced changes due to the ill health of Chairman and Manager Graeme Smith. John Pollard took over the reins supported by Stuart Nethercott & Liam Aves. Several additions to the squad were made and some players returned to the club after having a spell away. There was a mixed bag of results at the start but after playing 11 games, due to family reasons, John Pollard stepped down from his role of manager and on the 20<sup>th</sup> October, Karl Duguid and Stuart Nethercott were appointed joint managers to lead the Club and bring some stability to the side. The results on the pitch continued in much the same vein, but a good run in the Essex Senior Cup saw us reach the Semi-Final for the first time, where we lost out to Premier division side Bowers and Pitsea. The final twelve games saw Town have their best run of season, which saw the side finish in a respectable thirteenth place in the League.

Cliff Akurang, has been appointed Manager for the forthcoming 2022 – 23 season. Cliff who has a long association with club and along with assistant Brian Sawyer will embark on a total rebuild of the side. It is going to be an interesting time at West Street and the supporters are right behind Cliff, everyone wishes him the very best of luck for the season.