

Altrincham Football Club Newsletter

Issue 1

December 2016

NEW BOSS AND BACKROOM STAFF

When Altrincham's board concluded the appointment of Jim Harvey hadn't had the effect not only desired but widely expected, given his impressive track record at various levels of the game, and terminated his contract on December 6, it was decided to place his assistant Matt Doughty in interim charge.



Matt Doughty

Matt is known as Buzz due to a jawline that resembles that of Toy Story character Buzz Lightyear, and he wasted no time sticking his chin out and declaring his pride at being trusted with trying to revive Alty's fortunes. Firmly believing an affinity with the club was a prerequisite for getting the best out of his players, swiftly turned to former Robins captain Robbie Lawton and Alty legend Graham Heathcote - a member of Tony Sanders' all-conquering line-up prior to serving as secretary, coach and manager - to join him on the sidelines. Explaining the thinking behind drafting in two iconic figures from Alty's past, Buzz said: 'I brought Robbie and Graham in because they have an affiliation with the club. When new players come in, they need to be made aware of what it means to play for Altrincham. There's no-one better than Robbie or Graham to do that. We need to instil it in them that we are battlers who are fighting for this club, and if they don't do the same, they don't get to wear the shirt. It's as simple as that. Robbie is a schoolteacher, as you know, so he has a way of

putting his thoughts into words, and if you had heard what he said to the players before the game at Blyth, you would realise that. It was inspirational. Even the players said wow when they were talking about it. That's the impact it had. He has played for Altrincham and been captain, and it's fair to say this club means the world to him. He's got a rapport with the club and a rapport with the fans, and he certainly makes himself heard on the touchline. What people might not know about Graham is his attention to detail. It's what struck me when I played for him. It is second to none. I played for a number of managers, like Steve Parkin, Graham Barrow and Chris Wilder. Steve Parkin managed in the Championship, and Chris Wilder looks like he'll be doing the same next season, the way it's going with Sheffield United at the moment. They ain't better than Graham for attention to detail, though, let me tell you. So to bring those two in was an absolute no-brainer. When new signings come in, they will think "ooh, right, I know what it means now. I need to wear the shirt with pride and show it in my performance." I honestly think if they do what we are telling them to, we will be fine. It really is simple as that, because organisation is massive in this division, massive.'

DIARY OF PLAYER COMINGS AND GOINGS SINCE NOVEMBER 1st

Nov 3 - midfielder Charlie Joyce, signed by Neil Young in the summer, leaves the club after his contract is cancelled by mutual consent. He made three starts and three appearances as substitute.

Nov 4 - Utility player Curtis Obeng, who can operate in defence or midfield, joins after a brief spell at Macclesfield, while midfielder Simon Lenighan signs from Warrington Town.



Curtis Obeng Simon Lenighan Sam Heathcote

Nov 12 - Centre-back Sam Heathcote joins Hyde United on a one-month loan. Luis Morrison-Derbyshire joins from Greenwich Borough, just as fellow-centre-back Danny Hall is released, two months after joining us, for a second spell, from Curzon Ashton.



Luis Morrison-Derbyshire

Nov 22 - Curtis Obeng leaves to take up an opportunity to play for Solihull Moors in the Vanarama National League after just one start and one substitute appearance.

Nov 24 - winger Billy Hasler-Cregg, another summer signing, has his contract cancelled and leaves the club after three substitute appearances.



Billy Hasler-Cregg

Nov 25 - centre-back Wayne Thomas returns to Kidderminster Harriers after arriving on loan on October 28. He made two league starts.



Wayne Thomas

Nov 27 - Harry Cain signs dual registration forms, enabling him to play for Skelmersdale United, as does Andrew Jones, for Mossley.



Harry Cain

Dec 3 - centre-back Clayton McDonald signs from Redditch United.



Clayton McDonald

Dec 9 - Matt Doughty releases three players, as Simon Lenighan leaves after three appearances, Morrison-Derbyshire after one and striker Phil Marsh after two starts and seven as substitute. Experienced midfielder Gary Jones signs on an initial one-month loan from Southport.



Phil Marsh

Gary Jones

Dec 15 - left-back Kyle Brownhill signs from Hyde.

Dec 16-Nicky Clee returns to the fold from Harrogate Town.



Nicky Clee

BY GEORGE!

Every club needs a thriving youth set-up, and, thanks to the efforts and expertise of George Heslop, Alty have one everybody can be proud of. Duncan Watmore may be the jewel in the crown - after bursting on to the scene and terrorising defences to such an extent, he was snapped up by Sunderland - but it doesn't end there. George's unerring eye for potential continues to keep the senior squad equipped with homegrown talent eager to make the grade at first-team level, with Harry Cain and Sam Heathcote both pressing their claims over the past 12 months and now Laurence Taylor and Will Foster breaking into Matt Doughty's 16 against Blyth Spartans in the FA Trophy. Both had a taste of first-

team action in the Cheshire Senior Cup at Crewe last season, and both will presumably be hoping for more of the same in the coming months after featuring in Matt's squad for both games against Blyth. No-one will be following their progress more keenly than George, after he brought both of them through the youth ranks and made Laurence his captain.



Laurence Taylor

Will Foster

UPCOMING FIXTURES

Monday, December 26 - FC United of Manchester, home, 3pm, Vanarama National League North.

Sunday, January 1 - FC United of Manchester, away, 3pm, Vanarama National League North.

Saturday, January 7 - Gloucester City, home, 3pm, Vanarama National League North.

Wednesday, January 11 - Runcorn Town, away, 7.45pm, Cheshire Senior Cup first round.

Saturday, January 14 - Gainsborough Trinity, home, 3pm, Vanarama National League North.

Saturday, January 21 - Chorley, away, 3pm, Vanarama National League North.

Tuesday, January 24 - Brackley Town, away, 7.45pm, Vanarama National League North

Saturday, January 28 - AFC Fylde, away, 3pm, Vanarama National League North.

HALF-SEASON TICKETS

It's the most wonderful time of the year, as the song goes, but those of an Alty persuasion may argue the end of April will run Christmas close, if we can do well enough in the second half of the season to climb out of trouble and safeguard our place in the Vanarama National League North. It promises to be eventful, if nothing else, and your continuing support is not only appreciated by the coaching staff and players but frequently cited as a significant factor in securing positive results. With that in mind, the club are making half-season tickets available, to cover all home league games from Boxing Day, inclusive, to the end of the campaign. We welcome FC United of Manchester to The J.Davidson Stadium on Boxing Day, while the final home game is against Alfreton on April 22. We all know what happened at their place a month ago, when all three points were ripped from our grasp in an agonising last few minutes, so atoning for that, as well as hopefully taking a decisive step towards safety will be the order of the day. Half-season tickets are available from the club offices, during normal weekday hours, and are priced as follows: Standing - £130 adults, £75 concessions; Seating - £150 adults, £80 concessions; 12-16 years old - £30; Under-12s - £15.

STRATEGIC REVIEW

The Club has commissioned a strategic review. This is being conducted by Nicky Watmore as a consultant to the Board, with Pete Foster providing day to day contact with the rest of the Club.

The objective of the review is to identify all the opportunities that could enable the Club to reach its potential over the next five years and to make sure the Club is structured and equipped to take advantage of these opportunities.

SETBACK FOR DUNCAN

Just as he was making his mark at international level for England under-21s, as well as for Sunderland in the Barclays Premier League, Duncan Watmore's season has been cruelly cut short by injury. Duncan, who made such a stunning impact in Altrincham colours and looks set to become the club's most famous and decorated ex-player, suffered a cruciate ligament injury in his side's 2-1 win over Leicester City and will miss the rest of the season. He was stretchered off, and the extent of the damage became clear after he underwent a scan. An indication of the esteem in which he is held on Wearside was provided by Sunderland manager David Moyes, who described his injury absence as 'a big blow' and added he was 'a big part of the first team' at The Stadium of Light. Everyone connected with Altrincham FC send their best wishes for a full recovery and hope he is back playing as well as ever at the start of next season.

REV. BRIAN CHANTLER

Altrincham FC expresses its condolences to the family of Rev. Brian Chantler, who passed away very suddenly last week, aged 82. He had been an Altrincham fan all his life, having started going to Moss Lane just after the War.

His daughter, Liz, told the Club "I had been bringing him to home games over the last few years, and he was still coming to matches this season, although we'd had to sit down in the stand this season rather than stand in our usual spot behind the goal. It's a pity results haven't been going so well this season but at least he got to see us win a couple of games in the FA Cup! He was thrilled to have got back in touch with one of his old schoolfriends with your help through the club and, although they never managed to meet up again, they corresponded quite often".

Liz is continuing Brian's membership of the Altrincham FC Patrons' Club in memory of her father.

NOVEMBER MONTHLY DRAW RESULTS


ALTRINCHAM FC
ROBINS
MONTHLY DRAW

RESULTS
NOVEMBER 2016

REPLICA AFC SHIRT = #59 J. SKELHORN
 HOSPITALITY PACKAGE = #124 M. JACKSON
 £25.00 = #250 A. DORSEY
 £75.00 = #543 M. DUNN
 £500.00 = #393 A. GEORGE

in association with SKkits

To join, fill in the form on the reverse of this page and hand into the club offices. Alternatively,
 Call: 0161 928 1045
 Email: office@altrinchamfootballclub.co.uk

Q&A WITH THE CHAIRMAN

In an attempt to improve communication between the boardroom and supporters, chairman Grahame Rowley has agreed to answer questions on any topic in a series of Q&As. Questions can be submitted to newsletter@altrinchamfootballclub.co.uk and they will be put to Grahame, with both the questions and answers presented in full on the official club website. So far, there have been two sessions, both conducted by Press and Media Officer John Edwards. Further Q&As are dependant on questions being sent in, so if anyone has anything whatsoever on their mind, please let us know at the above email address. Here are the two to have been held so far.

1. In the first of a series of Q&As aimed at improving communication between the board of Altrincham FC and supporters, Press and Media Officer John Edwards has posed a series of questions to chairman Grahame Rowley and Community Sports Trust Board member Pete Foster. The interview begins with a couple of general questions and then goes on to questions submitted by supporters. Don't forget, this is an opportunity to quiz members of the board on any topic you wish to air. Make the most of it by emailing your questions to newsletter@altrinchamfootballclub.co.uk

Q: When and how did the idea first arise and has it turned out as initially envisaged?

GR: It came about after the Olympics in London. The Government were talking about leaving a legacy for sportsmen and women of the future, and we just thought wouldn't it be great to do something similar? I remember sitting down with Pete Foster and Ian Watmore at my house, along with my wife, and Ian Foden was there as well, and we chatted about what we could do as a club to leave some sort of legacy from the Olympics that would also count as a project we could all be proud of and would benefit the club. One factor that kept cropping up in our discussions was whether we could improve our facilities. The bar area was cramped and inadequate compared to other clubs and the state of the changing rooms was a cause for concern. Manchester United had been using our ground for a few years but had stipulations on what they wanted and what they considered acceptable. The away changing room was very borderline in that respect, so the feeling was, ok, let's see what we can do about building something new that's going to benefit us and take us forward as a club. We got Ian Foden involved on a consultancy basis, and as one of The Flaggers, he threw himself into it enthusiastically and offered his services free of charge. We talked things over and looked at what kind of drawings we could do and what could be built on the space available. That's one thing that amazed me, the size of the building compared to the area it was going on. Before we started, we looked at the mausoleum and couldn't help wondering: is that going to be big enough? Are we building something for the sake of it? It's not going to be all that big, is it? Is it going to be a lot of money for something not that great? But when you see it

now and realise it's 25mx12m, you appreciate it is quite a size. A lot of people have said they can't quite believe we've managed to get that much on to what looked a fairly small space. A lot of hard work went into reaching that stage, though. We were the first club outside the Football League to gain a grant from the FA Facilities Fund. Prior to us, it had only been Premier League clubs. Pete Foster led the way on that by ploughing through a mountain of paper work to make it happen. It entailed a lot of hours and a lot of jumping through hoops. For all that, we were still a bit short of the amount needed, but the last piece in the jigsaw was a grant from the landfill company Viridor. It was a big breakthrough getting just over £100,000 from them, but it wasn't exactly straightforward. Because they want to be sure buildings their grants are used for aren't knocked down five years later, they told us an 80-year lease on the ground had to be in place. We had just extended our 20-odd-year lease to 40 years but had to go back to the council to try and get it extended to 80. I could write a book on my various meetings with the council over that. Suffice to say it caused problems, but we got there in the end.

Q: Why a Community Sports Hall rather than Altrincham FC social club?

GR: I think at least partly because we see the football club as the centre of the community. We had a thriving community section as it was, in terms of people going out and coaching in the community, but we didn't have anywhere that could be used to bring people into the club. The thinking was, if we could bring people in through the door, it might integrate them into the club itself, and I think that has been borne out by the increase in attendances. I know it's hard to verify where people have come from when you analyse crowd figures, or what has attracted them, but I think people coming into the ground to use the new facility, seeing there is a football club here and a pitch out in the middle does actually encourage them to come along to games and support the team. I know many of the 2-5-year old mini-kickers on a Saturday morning are back at the ground in the afternoon for the game, along with their parents. I have been accused of taking my eye off the football side of things, but the community board and trust are run by a separate group of people. I have no influence on that board whatsoever. They have their own plans and carry them out as they see fit. But what is beyond dispute is that the facility is a huge benefit for the football club. If you look at the money we have taken from the increased size of the bar, better catering and the club shop being inside the hall, you will see it has gone up and up. Look at the accounts, and it has risen exponentially since the hall first opened. It is a registered charity, a non-profit-making business, so they have to reinvest money they make into expanding the facilities there. But that helps us as well, because the more schools and individuals engaged in activities there, the more likely it is those people are going to come and watch the team. Another factor in the CSH project being chosen was the availability of Grant Funding – we would not have been able to raise anywhere near the same amount of Grant Funding for a Social Club.

The following questions were supplied by Matt Taylor:

Q: Why is Grahame Rowley holding a Q&A regarding the CSH? I thought we had a completely separate and independent CSH board who I assume would be better placed to answer such questions?

GR: I am quite happy and able to field questions about the hall because I was in on the project from its inception to its completion. Equally, I readily acknowledge that Pete Foster is better qualified to provide in-depth information about finances and how it is going generally, and he will do that, where required. I would like to add I just think it's a shame the hall is coming in for so much stick because the team are not doing well on the pitch. People are looking for a reason why the team have not done better since the building appeared, and are linking the two, but you can't correlate one with the other.

Q: How many paid employees are employed by the CSH? Including full-time staff, part-time staff, community positions, ad-hoc/permanent/contracted coaches, on-going contractors (catering etc.)?

Pete Foster: There are two full-time administrators and one part-time, and three regular coaches. I wouldn't say the coaches are full-time exactly, but they are regular. Additionally, there are session coaches who may be pulled in when demand is there. On the catering front, when there is an event or function in the hall, it would be Richie Bentley and usually at least one assistant, again depending on demand.

Q: Have all of these jobs/contracts been advertised externally to ensure that we have the best candidate or financial deal in place?

PF: The administrator positions were all advertised externally. The interview panel was chaired by Ian Watmore. The coaches have been appointed based on their performance at Fun Weeks where we need a number of session coaches. One of them is Sam Heathcote and another is Andrew Jones, and as players, they are exceptionally popular with the kids. To my mind, that makes them very good appointments.

Q: While I understand that the CSH is providing the football club with a revenue stream through the bar sales, the cost of having the CSH to the football club would appear to be that the football club has lost a lot of its fundraisers over the past few years, when the focus has switched to raising funding for the CSH. Would you say that net-net the football club is still ahead of where we were in the days of the Noel White Suite? How much has football club fundraising fallen over the past 5 years? This is something that was alluded to by the chairman at a previous fans forum.

GR: Yes, I would say for sure we are ahead of where we were before. We had to organise fund-raisers to pay off the debt that was outstanding on the hall, but if you look at where we are now, we are miles ahead. The income brought in over

the past two years has put us way ahead of where we would be if the hall had not been built. There is so much going on that is benefiting us. Alan Green only charged a small fee to be guest speaker at a recent dinner after I spoke to Jonathan Wall at the BBC. It was similar to when we had Robbie Savage here, and it was because they realised it was the for Community Sports Hall, (I.e. for a charity). Roy Keane was probably the most successful dinner we've had so far, and he did it for free, again, because he wanted to raise funds for the hall. But even on these evenings, when they are essentially fund-raisers, all the bar profits go to the club, so it really is a win-win situation for the football club. If you look at events such as the Beer Festival – because of the new facility, far more profitable than 'pre-CSH'. We have also agreed an excellent brewery sponsorship deal on the basis of the CSH bar sales. If you pick over the bones, you will see we are all working in the same direction, for the good of the club. We want to involve the community and raise our profile locally, but above all, we are looking after the football club and its long-term future.

Q: Given that the CSH already appears to be used regularly, is the football club now at capacity in terms of revenue that can be generated through the CSH (excluding bar price increases)? Is there actually the physical capacity to increase bar takings in excess of their current level, to further support the football club? Or is that it?

GR: It's not at full capacity. Last time we looked, it was at about 60 per cent, but I'm not sure you can go much above 70-75 per cent because of cross-overs and time needed to set things up. But it has become more and more popular, and the more people use the facility, the more they realise how useful it is. In November and December, there isn't a single Friday or Saturday still free, so it is getting busier and busier. There is still potential to increase some of the turnover and takings, but equally there is no question it is really taking off as a popular and successful venue.

Q: While the bar may be bringing revenue in on a match-day, I would have concerns at how much money we are actually missing out on at half-time or pre-match due to people being put off by the queues and the speed of service (even on match-days with moderate crowds). That's not a criticism of the bar staff, who can only work as fast as the tools allow them to. Could we introduce one of those machines that pour multiple pints on the back-bar (for use on match-days)? Or have a dedicated 'bottle-lane' at the bar to reduce congestion and maximise revenue during the limited half-time window?

GR: When you compare what we do now on match-days to what we did in the old bar, I would say takings have increased by over 50 per cent. The old bar could hold 60-70 people, whereas the new one can cater for 200-300, but you are going to get queues wherever you are, unfortunately. On the concourse at Old Trafford or any ground in the country, there are going to be queues at a bar or food outlet. But we do want to alleviate that as much as possible, and that's

why people such as myself, Steve Foster and Stuart Buchan will go behind the bar to help out at half-time or after the game to try and ensure people are served as quickly as possible. Of course, there are only so many tills and pumps that can be used at once, but when it is a peak time, we are always looking to minimise inconvenience. I know what you are saying about multi-pump devices and so on. We try and ease waiting times as it is by having half-time orders that can be picked up at half-time. We are trying to improve things, and we take people's concerns on board. It is difficult to think of an ideal solution to this, but we always welcome ideas and suggestions.

Q: Apologies if I have missed them, but why don't we have large adverts around the CSH advertising football club initiatives such as the new-Yankee scheme (sorry, it's name escapes me...probably due to it's woefully low profile) to the parents of the kids using the hall during the week? Have leaflets been distributed inviting them to join? Is anything else in place to try and use the CSH activities to raise further funds for the 'football club'? For example, do we have a mailing list with CSH users (non-supporters) signed up – in order to communicate 'football club' fund raising schemes, or is everything focused on CSH fund raising? One idea could be a £5 a week (might appear expensive, but consider the audience) bonus-ball scheme that could raise funds for the 'football club'? It appears that the local community is getting a lot out of the sports hall, and so it wouldn't seem unfair to start asking for a bit back in return.

GR: I will take that on board. We do have leaflets out and about for some of the schemes that are going on. And we do actually give out monthly draws in packs when we have a fun week and when we do Saturday morning clubs. Parents are given them. We try our hardest to be proactive and give out things. Also, as mentioned at the agm, we are planning to produce a newsletter and want people to email in and sign up to that, so we can give information out to them. We do a bonus ball scheme at the moment for £1 a week. I advertised it on the club website, but only one or two people came forward and took the opportunity to join it. We need people to come forward and help run these sort of schemes. It's all right saying the club should do this and the club should do that, but who is the club? The club is everyone involved. If you have some ideas and want to run with them, I would welcome it, and others here would be happy to help oversee them.

Q: Without wanting to labour the point on football club revenue, do takings from the club shop go to the football club or to the CSH? Slightly off topic, but are there plans to locate this somewhere more permanent, or is it working well enough to be left where it is?

GR: The club shop is run on behalf of the football club and is nothing to do with the Community Sports Hall. I think the reason it is in the hall is because it is a nice environment in there, as opposed to some cold hut outside, and sales have shown, by increasing probably three-fold, that it works a lot better there. All

takings from the club shop go to the football club and, of course, there is no rental for using the hall to sell merchandise. It is working superbly where it is. It's in the eyeline of supporters while they are having a drink, rather than having to rely on people going into a separate facility to inspect what's on offer, and there seems no reason why it should be anywhere else.

Q: Why don't we have more football club memorabilia around the CSH? In all the years I've followed Alty, I've never been in a football club social club on a match-day that feels less connected with the football club.

GR: Well, I'm sorry you feel that way, but the simple reason is because it is a sports hall. People have asked why can't we put pictures up round the hall, but we can't because they would get damaged. We have schools and clubs and others playing sports in the hall, and that often entails a football flying through the air. We've had to use toughened glass to make sure the windows don't get broken, but there's still been the odd instance of ceiling tiles being damaged after being hit by a ball. I'm afraid framed photos wouldn't last long at all. It just wouldn't be practical.

The following two questions were sent in by John Henderson:

Q: What additional income streams or 'in kind' benefits do the Football Club now derive from the Community Hall and where cash, are the proceeds made available to the Board immediately?

GR: The income streams are from catering and the bar from all functions that are held in the hall, and it goes directly into the club's accounts.

Q: Secondly, given your comments at the agm about the club subsidising £20,000 of the CSH's initial staffing costs, could you confirm their recent repayment was funded from CSH income and not from any monies due to the football club in any case?

GR: It was done all from CSH income that they generated over the previous year. It was a straight repayment of what we put up front in the first place.

Final question: Who is on the Board of the AFC Community Sports Co?

GR: The Board members of the Community Sports Co are Tony Collier (Managing Partner, MBL), Carole Nash (OBE), Fred Nash, Geoff Morris, Karen Rowley, Phil Taylor, Peter Foster

2. John Edwards writes: For the second in our series of Q&As with chairman Grahame Rowley, we have received one question from long-standing supporter David Gale about facilities on the Popular Side at The J.Davidson Stadium. I put David's question to the chairman first, then added a few of my own to try and broaden the interview and expand on what David was asking. Don't forget, this is your opportunity to have anything that's on your mind answered by the chairman of your club. Just email your question to newsletter@altrinchamfootballclub.co.uk and you will get a reply.

Q: Having stood on the Popular Side for almost 50 years, I do think facilities there are continuously forgotten and I know this view is shared by many of the supporters standing in this area. We lost not only our toilet block, when it was demolished several years ago, but also our tea hut and the middle address system speaker, which was removed when the cantilever stand was built. Although you can hear the speaker in an empty ground, it is impossible to hear what is said in this position on match days. The cantilever stand was of course a good step forward when built, but the view and capacity has been completely ruined by television gantries, protective nets, etc, which are now permanently in place. The new community hall was an excellent move forward, and, as someone who likes a drink before the match, I particularly appreciate this improvement. I know its other activities must be hugely benefiting to the club and community, but please consider the facilities for the poor folk on the far side of the ground, who never fail to turn up.

A: I have great sympathy with David and others who make the same points about standing on the Popular Side. Many years ago, when I first started watching Alty, that is where I stood. My first memories of being an Alty fan are of standing on the halfway line on the Pop Side, right up against the barriers, so I do appreciate where you are coming from, David, when you talk about having a favourite spot for watching the games. With regard to the toilets, they were built years and years ago, and we found out that the actual drains from them didn't lead into the main drain, as they should, but instead went into some sort of cesspit. In the end it became some sort of environmental issue, and really it was in the best interests of everyone concerned with the football club that we got rid of them. We did look into replacing them at the time, but the nearest actual main drain was in the middle of Golf Road, and when we looked at it, the cost was quite excessive. Improving facilities on that side of the ground is one of the projects we need to put on our list, though. There are so many things round the ground we would ideally like to do. Away fans may well say the toilet and catering facilities at their end are insufficient, and they may have a point. They could do with improving, but the interests of our supporters come first, and I do take on board the need to make improvements on the Popular Side as and when we can. The strategic plan for the club is well underway, and facilities on that side of the ground, including catering, should be on the list of things to do. We will see what we can do about it. We have got enough volunteers at the moment

to run the various catering outlets round the ground, and I would hope more would come forward and offer their services if we were able to build more.

Q: So if finances permitted, it would be high on the list?

A: I think so, yes. I can fully understand why people would not be enamoured with the idea of walking round the ground for a pie or whatever, queuing up to be served and then walking all the way back again, so it would be a win-win situation, because it would be appreciated by Pop Side patrons and encourage them to buy food and drink, which, in turn, would enhance the club's takings.

Q: The scaffolding for Alty TV has caused some consternation, but it is a very popular service. There's no easy answer, really, is there?

A: There isn't, unfortunately, when you consider Manchester United under-18s play here and MUTV cover the games. They have all got their safety regulations, which have got to be adhered to. People ask why don't we hang the gantry from the roof, but it comes down to cost. The way we are operating at the moment is the most cost-effective way to do it. I do understand what people mean when they say they have stood in the same place for 20 or 30 years and don't appreciate having to move to get a better, clearer view, but sometimes a compromise has to be reached when there is no easy solution that suits everyone. I would say, as well, we've got a great facility there, with Radio Robins and Alty TV. Unfortunately, it has meant a few people being inconvenienced over their preferred vantage point, and I am sorry that has happened.

Q: To be fair to Alty TV, the coverage is appreciated by people who are at the game, anyway, isn't it, not just those who can't make it?

A: Absolutely. It's amazing, really. I sit in the main stand, and it's funny, because when I watch the highlights later, provided by a camera on the opposite side of the ground, I suddenly realise something happened because of such-and-such a tackle or pass or mistake. It's a real eye-opener and so interesting, because it's like a different dimension. It gives you a different perspective on the game. When I was standing on the Popular Side all those years ago, I never imagined the day would dawn when I could watch an Alty game on TV, which effectively it is. I think Mark Bennett and his team do an absolutely superb job to make it available to everyone, including exiles who are not able to get to games. That's great, because it helps spread the word.

Q: Apart from the cost element of suspending the gantry, would the roof be strong enough to take the weight, anyway?

A: I'm not sure about that. I would have to ask the people involved in putting the structure up. I'm not sure the actual main bar across the top would be sufficient to hang the gantry from. You would probably need some sort of

structural survey done to see if it could bear the weight, and that would probably be expensive in itself.

Q: Money is tight, and you are in agreement with everyone else that the team is the priority, but better facilities are at least being given consideration, then?

A: Yes, you are always looking at ways of improving things. For every plus, there's always a minus, unfortunately, and when you think of how the TV coverage is a massive plus for the club, you then realise it comes at a cost to some, and I would very much like to be able to address that at some point. If we could minimise those minuses, or even better extinguish them altogether, I would be delighted. That is certainly the aim, provided it is practical.

SMART STORAGE CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Here's how we staged our own version of Toy Story a few weeks ago by agreeing to help Smart Storage spread some festive cheer. This is how Press and Media Officer John Edwards wrote the article..

With Christmas fast approaching, Altrincham have joined forces with one of their main sponsors to try and bring some cheer to local children who would otherwise be facing a bleak festive period.

Paul Whittaker, group sales manager of Smart Storage, launched the company's latest Christmas Toy Appeal earlier this week and was delighted to announce that Alty have responded by opening their doors and urging local people to turn the reception area at The J.Davidson Stadium into a Santa's grotto.

The incentive for anyone thinking of donating a toy, according to Paul, is the knowledge it will light up a young face that would otherwise be desolate on Christmas morning.

'We are basically appealing for any toys, ideally new and still in their boxes, for children aged between zero and 16, because there are an unbelievable number of kids out there who would otherwise go without at Christmas,' he said. 'You don't expect it in this area, because we are very lucky where we live, but, let me tell you, just round the corner, there are children and families who have nothing.

'Children who have nothing and adults who have nothing to give them at Christmas, and as someone fortunate enough to have four children, I can't bear that thought.

'Children with nothing is the big thing for me, what I look for most of all. A lot of appeals nowadays give to hospitals, and that is fantastic. But those children tend to have something already. My passion is trying to provide help, at this time of year, for kids who don't have anything.

'Believe me, there are plenty of them, and some of the stories I hear and feedback I get, after the toys and presents have gone out, make me cry. You

can feel the emotion, and that's why I keep doing this year after year and keep hoping the final figure we raise will exceed the previous one.

'Last year, we collected over 10,000 toys in the run-up to Christmas. That's a phenomenal response from the local public, and every single toy was distributed to a deserving recipient, whether it be a youngster suffering from some sort of disability or one who would otherwise have had nothing.

'We genuinely believe we are making people's Christmases. Children who would not otherwise have a toy at least have a few things to open and a few things to play with on Christmas Day. This is the 11th year of the Toy Appeal, and with the help of Altrincham FC and all our other supporters and partners, I'm hoping we can beat last year's figure.

'The official launch was last Monday, and it's fantastic that Alty have offered to be a drop-off centre, so anyone who has a toy or gift can pop in to reception at the ground and hand it over. The club have also agreed to make the Tamworth home game on December 3 a special collection event, where supporters are encouraged to come along and bring a toy with them.

'We are also working in conjunction with the ladies' team, who are holding collections at their games, so let's see what we can do for needy, underprivileged youngsters in the space of the next month.

'All the toys will be either distributed or picked up from our Altrincham headquarters in Craven Road in the week building up to Christmas. There's never a shortage of homes for them, but I want to stress massively that if there are more individuals or charities out there who feel they would benefit from our appeal, we want to hear from them.

'We will always try to help, so if anyone hears of any families or children going through a particularly hard time, coming up to Christmas, please let me know on 07703 348481 or Paul.Whittaker@smart-storage.co.uk. Just contact me directly, and I'll do all I can.'

MARATHONBET NON-LEAGUE CHALLENGE PRIZE

Brian Flynn, Press & Media Officer at Altrincham FC reports that "Altrincham Football Club is delighted that it is the winner of the Marathonbet 'Non-League Challenge' Social Media competition for amassing the most retweets (487) of the #Nonleaguechallenge tweet between November 7th-14th.

Winning this competition brings a prize of £2,000 and we will announce how this money is to be used as soon as we can.

A massive thanks is due to Andrew Flynn and Jack Jolly, who did a brilliant job in creating and executing a social media strategy that delivered this superb prize".

SENIOR SERVICE

World football's governing body, fifa, have come in for some ridicule and scorn in recent years, but never more so than when they tried to put a stop to poppies being worn by the nation's footballers as a mark of respect for those killed in wartime. No-one thumbed their nose at fifa's stance more aptly than Altrincham, in the form of goalkeeping coach Ian Senior. Here's how we told the tale of his sterling efforts and how they were officially recognised by the Royal British Legion...

"Fifa may have done their best to prevent England and Scotland players wearing poppies on their shirts but nothing was going to stop Altrincham showing the rest of football how to commemorate Remembrance weekend.

World football's governing body caused uproar after threatening the English and Scottish associations with sanctions for defying their poppy ban at Wembley on Friday night.

There were no such restrictions at club level, though, and no-one did more than Alty goalkeeping coach and kit supplier Ian Senior to mark the anniversary of Armistice Day in fitting style.

While most clubs settled for weaving a poppy into their normal strip, SKkits boss Ian devised and produced a special one-off shirt for Alty's Vanarama National League North game with Salford City at The J.Davidson Stadium on Saturday.

Bearing a huge poppy in the centre, with Lest We Forget underneath, the shirts were then auctioned in an initiative that raised nearly £1,000 for the British Legion.

'I produced 20 shirts in all,' said Ian. 'One was signed by all the staff and framed, and that went for £205 on its own. The others went for £630 altogether, then a raffle for one other shirt raised £135, so that's £970 in total, which isn't a bad effort at all.



'All the fuss from fifa really spurred me on to do this. It seemed very apt for memorial weekend, and I just couldn't see what the issue was with fifa.

'I don't get their problem at all, but at least we've made a statement as Altrincham Football Club by wearing these shirts and holding a minute's silence. We've shown our respect for those who lost their lives serving our country, and that's how it should be. It just felt right that, finally, we should auction the shirts to raise funds for the British Legion, and well done to everyone who took part.'

A British Legion spokesperson said: 'The Royal British Legion would like to thank all at Altrincham FC for their fantastic fundraising for the Poppy Appeal this year. The money raised will help the Legion to continue to help the whole Armed Forces community in the local area.'

MR AND MRS ALTY!

When you talk about club stalwarts, people who are the very fabric of a football club, it's difficult to think of a better example than George and Jenny Heslop. Both have devoted probably more years than they care to remember to ensuring the smooth running of the club, on and off the pitch. Jenny managed the bar in the old Noel White Suite and the Saturday Yankee lottery, as well as countless other jobs that even stretched to washing the kit, while George distinguished himself as the club's most successful youth team manager and was company secretary. Retirement for the two hugely-popular, enormously-valued and immensely loyal servants of the club was rightly recognised by a bouquet from director Neil Faulkner to mark their many years of dedication. Both are owed a debt of gratitude, and it is to be hoped both will remain familiar faces in and around the ground.

Altrincham F.C. Ladies

WOMEN'S TEAM LOOK TO A BRIGHT FUTURE

BY

PAUL HATTON (Isle of Man reporter)

(@Hatty1970)

Altrincham FC women's team have come a long way since their formation back in the 2011 from humble beginnings on a field behind BTH School has since then witnessed a Cup Final and a promotion, this season has seen the Robins become a highly-organised and feared force within North West Regional Division One South. When manager Keith Edleston started with Alty five years, pitting his managerial wits and playing against fabled, established opposition such as FC Utd of Manchester, Ellesmere Port and Merseyrail Bootle must have been a distant dream but this has now become reality.



The 2016/17 season has seen Alty's best season on record. The campaign before saw the Robins just avoid relegation. It was at the end of the last footballing semester that saw Altrincham embark on their first international tour and play two friendlies on the Isle of Man in the Spring Cup tournament. The opening match saw them lose narrowly to the Manx representative 1ST eleven 3-2, they went onto defeat a Manx Development side 3-1 the day after. It was believed that the tour has brought this close-knit footballing unit closer together and this has been reflective in their results this campaign.

A busy pre-season started on the 7th August 2016 with a 3-1 defeat against Bury with a mix-and-match team, Altrincham quickly found their feet with a 3-3 draw against Rhyl and Prestatyn and impressive wins over Leigh RMI and Curzton Ashton, registering 4-1 victories on both occasions.

Pre-season also saw a number of new signings. These have included Megan Wright (West End Girls), Sadie Powell (Manchester City ladies) Jade Hesketh (Academy Juniors). However, the most impressive signing has to go capturing the signature of Isle of Man Women's representative captain Anna Dillon, who makes regular trips to the North-West from the middle of the Irish Sea.



When the league campaign started on the 4th September 2016, they hit the ground running. The opening match saw a 3-2 away win over Chorltonians, the week after Alty made it two wins out of two, defeating Stockport County 6-3 and maintained with impressive form with 4-1 victory over Egerton.

This was then followed by their first defeat of the season, losing 2-1 against Ellesmere Port in a match Altrincham dominated but couldn't put the ball into the back of net. Alty lost again the weekend after with a 3-2 defeat against then top-of-the-table Fc Utd of Manchester, their podcast went on record to say that Altrincham was their toughest opponents in the league so far this campaign.

Winning service was soon resumed with a 3-1 victory over Liverpool City Community FC and a hard fought 3-3 draw against Liverpool Feds which saw Altrincham net a last gasp equaliser.

The cup campaign started with a defeat in the Argyle Sports Cup against 4-3 against North West Premier league side Manchester Stingers, a team positioned above Alty in the league pyramid. However winning ways were quickly restored with a 3-0 victory over Northwich Vixens, this result saw the women's side climb to third, their highest ever league position since their formation.

However, disappointing results followed with 8-2 away defeat against Warrington Wolverines and 1-0 home defeat by Curzon Ashton.

The team has very much youth on their side. In goals, although Alty are without injured Lucy O'Dwyer for this season, Lizzie Brereton has performed wonders between the sticks. In defence, Bliss Molyneux leads and organises from their back, it was no surprise that she has been given the captaincy. Her central defensive partnership with Louise Edleston continues to blossom, with Kyeshia Brown at left-back with either Heather Scott or Lucy Smith occupying the right berth.

In midfield, Laura Dodds is the main lynch pin and driving force within the centre, ably assisted by either Anna Dillon, Gail Marguerite, Paloma Ortiz-Lopez. On the flanks, Georgia Plant, Brogan Walsh and Jess Hartopp all provide enterprise and flair plus their share of goals, the former being an expert dead-ball specialist.

The biggest challenge for Keith is having to remodel his attack unit. Since Kate Bryan who had scored 9 goals in 10 games has gone on her travels, we have seen Jade Hesketh, Megan Wright and Laura Kelly lead the forward line.

Keith is also keen to encourage giving youth chance with the club providing a pathway from their burgeoning youth set-up to their senior team. This recently bore fruit which saw Megan Rowley signing senior forms for the club following a number of impressive footballing displays at junior level under her belt.



With David Grundy, John McManus and Phil Taylor part of Keith's trusted backroom staff, we have seen some good attendances at Mersey Valley this season. This is a side that plays with pride, passion and giving everything towards the cause. With this youthful side, the future is bright! The future is Altrincham FC women's team.

ALTRINCHAM JUNIORS OVERVIEW

Did you know?

Altrincham FC has a large and very successful junior section within the Club.

Formerly known as Hale Barns United JFC (established in 1971), Altrincham Juniors was formed in 2006 and at that point, they had 15 boys' teams.

Today, there are over 50 junior and youth teams representing the Club, made up of boys and girls.

The juniors also run a Saturday morning Soccer Cub for the any boys to play football from the age of 6 upwards and an equivalent Soccer Club on a Wednesday evening to cater for any girls who want to play for Altrincham FC each week.

In total, there are approximately 750 children who represent Altrincham FC, wearing the same strip as the First Team, each week during the season.

The Junior Section is run by an Executive Committee, separate from the Senior Club and is self-sufficient; they rely entirely on funds collected from their player's parents by way of annual subscriptions. It is a non-profit making organisation and is not dependent on any money from the main Club.

The teams are managed by unpaid volunteers, predominately parents of players in the Club.

Altrincham Juniors attained Community Club status from Cheshire FA in 2015. It's managers and coaches are already qualified or in the process of achieving a minimum of an FA Level One coaching badge and by virtue of this, they are qualified in Child Safe guarding practices and emergency aid.

On the field of play, the juniors registered one of the best seasons yet in terms of trophies won. In addition, their Youth Team won the Cheshire Cup for the first time in the Club's history and during the summer, they participated and won the Foyle Cup held in Northern Ireland.

The Junior Club ethos is to provide every possible opportunity for local children of any ability to play competitive and non-competitive football in a safe and friendly environment. The emphasis is on the junior players having fun by enjoying their football and not on winning at all costs. For those players with the talent and desire to develop their football, there is a clear pathway for the boys to graduate from junior to youth football, through to the Reserves and ultimately the First Team and for the girls to move from the juniors to the Ladies Team. Many of our junior players and managers regularly attend Moss Lane to cheer on the first team.

COMMUNITY SPORTS 2016 ROUND UP

In 2016, Altrincham FC Community Sports had a busy and eventful year through work in schools, local community events and within the Community Sports Hall. This year saw us in six different primary schools, providing sports coaching to over 500 children on a weekly basis.



We also provided up to 27.75 hours of adult fitness sessions on a weekly basis, including: yoga, gentle exercise, walking football and disability football.

Community Sports Hall

After a successful first year since opening in 2015, the CSH has seen an increasing rise in usage and attendance figures. Three new user groups have been added to the timetable on a weekly basis offering adult fitness, toddler sessions and a community group. We have also added additional adult fitness, disability football, walking football and Alty Mini Kickers sessions.



Friday evenings and weekends have been hired out throughout the year for birthdays, weddings, christenings, funerals, anniversaries, council events, open days and much more. The added exposure through events such as these has been clear to see through repeat bookings and new/returning fans to AFC home match days.

A large proportion of the community work is part-funded through The National League Trust, which allows us to provide a wider range of activities. Since the hall opened two years ago, we can confidently say there are activities for all ages and abilities. The most exciting project of the year was successfully receiving a Sportivate grant to fund a new weekly disability football session in November and December. This session has seen four participants attending regularly and will continue into the new year with the aim to provide other sports/exercise sessions.

Children's Activities

Alty Mini Kickers was another success this year, with an average of 70-80 players attending each week, spread over five sessions. We have improved links with Altrincham FC Junior boys and girls teams, to promote a pathway for when children reach aged 5/6 and want to continue with football within the club.

This Summer saw a new record of four holiday fun weeks on offer, totalling ten across the year. Multi-sports and football weeks were mainly on offer to approximately 800 local children, however, during the Summer we included some unique, exciting activity days. Some of the children enjoyed days out at Old Trafford, Etihad Stadium, National Football Museum, Silverblades Ice Rink, Stamford Park, Altrincham Leisure Centre and Altrincham Golf Club.



Schools

Altrincham FC Community Sports have been present in six schools on a regular basis this year: Stamford Park Juniors, Stamford Park Infants, Cloverlea, St Vincents, Willows and Park Road. Coaches provide sports coaching as part of curriculum cover, lunchtime/breakfast clubs and after school clubs to over 500 children a week.

We held our first ever primary school tournaments this year, the first being at Altrincham FC in May, as years 3&4 got the opportunity to play at the J.Davidson Stadium. The second tournament was held at Altrincham Grammar School for Boys in December for years 5&6.



Both tournaments will continue to be an annual event now for Altrincham FC Community Sports, with the aim to grow bigger and include more schools each time.

This year we expanded our schools work to include more range of activities, as we saw over 200 local students from Stamford Park Infants and Juniors visit the stadium for guided tours and to learn more about Altrincham FC's history. Coaches also went out to Willows Primary School as part of their Summer sports week, with players Sam Heathcote (AFC) and Rory Fallon (FC United of Manchester) delivering healthy advice talks and football sessions to the whole school over the course of a day.

Events

Altrincham FC Community staff participated in the annual Altrincham Festival, Children's Adventure Farm open day, Wythenshawe Games and Timperley Fair in the Summer.



The Altrincham Festival parade was the highlight as we aimed to promote Senior Exercise, Walking Football and Gentle Yoga sessions.

Our Walking Football group participated in the FA People's Cup for the first time this year as interest has soared, now over 20 players a week partake in the two sessions we run.

For the first time, we held a Christmas Pantomime, Halloween party and a ladies cocktail making evening. Altrincham FC staff and volunteers also ran in the Manchester 10k this Summer, raising approximately £2000 towards the Community Sports Co.

Altrincham FC Community Sports Hall has been host to more local charity fundraising evenings, working alongside: CRY Heart Screening, Harry's Trust, Dogs4Rescue, Brooklands Dragons, Altrincham Grammar School for Boys, AFC Juniors and Children's Adventure Farm. We attended awards evenings, coming runner-up in the Cheshire FA Awards (Development Programme of the Year) and Trafford Sport Awards (Club of the Year).

WINNER

Altrincham & Sale
Chamber
of Commerce

BUSINESS AWARDS 2016

**CHARITY OF
THE YEAR**



At the Altrincham Chamber of Commerce awards in November, Altrincham FC Community Sports won 'Charity Of The Year', after coming runner up in 2014, highlighting the improvement and success gained over twelve months. As we approach the new year, our focus turns to 2017 and increasing participation levels across all activities we run in the Community Sports Hall. We will be holding fundraising events, partaking in more local community events and looking to forge better links with other organisations and charity groups. We also hope to offer additional children's holiday fun weeks and increase the amount of schools we provide coaching to, encouraging children to lead healthy and active lifestyles through sport.

Thank you for all the support, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year from all of us at Altrincham Football Club.