

## In the beginning...

The origins of senior football in Maidenhead can be traced back to October 1870 with the formation of Maidenhead Football Club, who subsequently played their first ever fixture on December 17th, 1870 against Windsor Home Park at Bond's Meadow near Maidenhead bridge. On Thursday, February 16th 1871 the club played their first game on the York Road site against Marlow. This ground, which was then shared with the cricket club, is now officially acknowledged as the oldest continually used football ground by the same club. Maidenhead were one of the original 15 entrants for the first ever FA Cup competition in 1871-72 and the following season reached the last four before losing to Oxford University. Maidenhead reached the quarter-finals in the next two seasons, but in 1876 did not enter, although this was the only season they failed to participate. They also entered the first ever Berks & Bucks Cup competition in 1878 - winning the competition for the first time in 1895 - and the first FA Amateur Cup in 1893. The adopted club colours were Red & Black, initially worn as halved shirts, but changed to stripes in 1904.

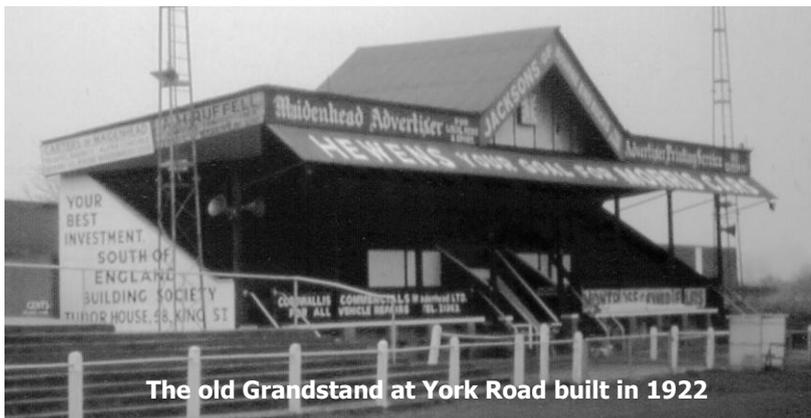


Maidenhead FC pictured in 1894/95 season

## The early years

Maidenhead FC merged with three sides before the Great War. Maidenhead Excelsior were founded in 1877 and joined forces with the Red & Blacks in 1885. Maidenhead Temperance – originally known as Maidenhead Band of Hope - amalgamated with the club in 1891 and Boyne Hill FC did likewise later that year. After many seasons of playing friendlies and Cup matches, Maidenhead FC were founder members of the Southern League in 1894 but competing in Division 2 with the likes of Watford, Brentford, Fulham and Brighton proved too demanding and the club consistently struggled. Eventually in 1902, after eight years of membership, they resigned and joined both the West Berkshire League and the Berks & Bucks

League. In 1904 Maidenhead became members of the Great Western Suburban League where they remained until the outbreak of the Great War.



The old Grandstand at York Road built in 1922

## Spartans and Corinthians

After the Great War the two remaining town clubs – Maidenhead and Maidenhead Norfolkiens (founded 1884) - decided to join forces. The conflict had meant that it was unrealistic to run two senior clubs, so after a meeting in April 1919, the Norfolkiens were incorporated into the Maidenhead club, and soon afterwards a kit of black and white was adopted as club colours. There was immediate success in the first season of structured league football as Maidenhead FC won the Great Western Suburban League. In August 1920 the suffix "United" was added but, more

importantly, the freehold of York Road was purchased for £1,450 from William Grenfell, later to become Lord Desborough. Two years later the club joined the Spartan League and the 500 seater grandstand (pictured above) – at the time considered one of the best of its kind - was opened by Club President, Ernest Dunkels.



Maidenhead United won the Spartan League title three times during their nineteen year stay. In 1929-30 season the club's goal-scoring record for a season was set when Jack Palethorpe (pictured) notched 65 goals in 39 games, including an individual post 1919 record of seven in one game against Wood Green Town. Jack went on to play for Sheffield Wednesday and scored in the Owls FA Cup win in 1935. In 1936, Maidenhead reached the semi-final of the FA Amateur Cup losing 4-1 to Ilford at West Ham in front of 18,000 spectators. It was during that season that the record attendance for a Maidenhead home match of 7,989 was set when Southall visited York Road in the quarter-final on

March. During the Second World War, the club competed in the Great Western Combination.



In 1945 the club were founder members of the Corinthian League. After many seasons of relative mediocrity, fortunes changed under the guidance of ex-Brentford forward, Len Townsend (pictured above), and then former Slough Town manager Jimmy Price (pictured below), and the Magpies enjoyed the first real "purple-patch" in their history. In seven seasons between 1956 and 1963 the club won the league three times, were runners-up twice and also reached the third round of the FA Amateur Cup in 1960, losing to West Auckland at York Road in front of a post-war record attendance for a Maidenhead game of 5,597. As well as County Cup, County Benevolent Cup and League Memorial Shield successes during this period, the 1st round proper of the FA Cup was reached in 1960 (losing 5-0 away to Colchester United), 1962 (losing 3-0 at home to Wycombe Wanderers) and 1963 (losing 2-0 to Bath City at York Road).



### **Athenians and Isthmians**

In 1963, United joined the Athenian League finishing a best placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in 1965-66. In 1973, the Magpies were elected into the newly created second division of the Isthmian League. They made a concerted effort to achieve promotion to the Premier Division in 1979 and 1980 when managed by Geoff Anthony (finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> on both occasions), and then again in 1985 under Brian Caterer and Colin Lippiatt, when they finished 4th. They remained in this division until 1987



when the Club suffered relegation for the first time in its history, and the dark days were made worse with the destruction of the main grandstand by an arson attack in December 1986. It took four seasons to get out of Division Two South, and this was achieved under the guidance of Martyn Spong (pictured left) in 1991. An Isthmian League record of 13 straight wins at the start of 1990-91 season was the springboard to success, but the club lost out on the title to Abingdon Town on the last day of the season. During this season, however, the team established a club record of 19 league games without defeat. Following the unexpected departure of Spong to Enfield in the summer of 1991, Gary

Goodwin, John Clements and then John Watt took on the manager's job with generally moderate results and the club regularly finished in or around mid-table.

### **The Devonshire years... part 1**

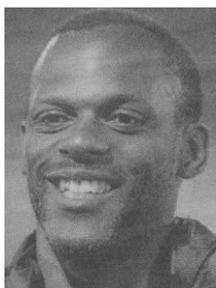


Following John Watt's dismissal in the summer of 1996, the Club appointed a new management team of Martyn Busby, the former QPR and Notts County midfielder, and Alan Devonshire the former West Ham and England midfielder. Although Busby left midway through the first season, Devonshire guided United to their first Cup success since 1970 by winning the Isthmian League Full Members Cup, and this was to herald the beginning of the club's second "purple-patch". In each season between 1996 and 2003 Maidenhead reached a cup final, winning five and losing two. After coming agonisingly close to promotion in 1997-98 season, two years later in 1999-2000 United made another concerted effort to reach the Isthmian League Premier Division. Despite the odd

hiccup, on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> May, a 1-0 home win against Champions Croydon guaranteed promotion. A new 700 capacity covered enclosure at the Canal end of the ground was completed in May 2000 together with new terracing on the railway side. In the summer of 2002 Chairman Roger Coombs announced that he would step down at the end of 2002-03 season and, in April 2003, Manager Alan Devonshire followed suit by announcing intention to leave the club at the season's end. Maidenhead finished a best ever 10<sup>th</sup> in the league and Devonshire's final game in charge (his 349<sup>th</sup>) saw the Magpies regain the County Cup by beating Aylesbury United 4-1 at Chesham.

### **Conference South and a return to the Southern**

The summer of 2003 saw new manager John Dreyer have to bring in virtually a new squad of players and, despite an uninspiring start, United secured Conference South football on the last day of the season. This was the highest level the club had played at since the Southern League days in the late nineteenth century. In 2004-05 season, an indifferent start saw Dreyer replaced by Dennis Greene but the club still finished in a relegation position only to be



reprieved following the demise of Hornchurch. Following a somewhat dismal start to the 2005-06 season Greene was dismissed and replaced by Carl Taylor. Taylor was briefed with the task of establishing the club in the Conference South, but proved incapable of this and the club were to finish adrift at the bottom of the table. However, in November 2005, a financial crisis loomed. A desperate situation was resolved when the members voted to wind up the existing member's club, and ownership was transferred to a new Limited Company set up by sponsors Pharmalink Consulting. Taylor was given the backing of the board to continue as manager as the club returned to the Southern League after a 102 year absence, but after a mediocre start to the season Taylor left the club. Former Yeading manager Johnson Hippolyte (pictured), known as "Drax", was appointed and had immediate success guiding the club to their first FA Cup First

Round proper appearance in 35 years. The Magpies eventually lost 2-0 at home to Stafford Rangers in a replay in front of 1,934 people. Improvement in their league form took a little longer and in January 2007 the club occupied 18<sup>th</sup> place. However an amazing run of 12 wins from the final 14 league games saw the Magpies finish fourth and qualify for the play offs. The winning run then continued in the semi final at Kings Lynn with a 1-0 triumph and, in the final played four days later, the Magpies beat league runners-up Team Bath 1-0 at Twerton Park, Bath to return to the Conference South just a year after relegation.

## Back in Conference South...



Upon returning to Conference South in 2007-08, Maidenhead finished in 17th, 6th, 16th and 19th positions. The 1<sup>st</sup> round proper of the FA Cup was reached in 2007 but the side was comprehensively defeated at Horsham by 4-1 in front of a 3,379 crowd. Maidenhead won the County Cup for the 20th time in 2010 defeating Wycombe Wanderers 3-2 at Marlow.

In March 2011, the club celebrated its 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a match at York Road against Oxford University. This was a rematch of the 1873 F A Cup tie between with the clubs where a 4-0 home victory for Oxford saw them progress to the final and a tie against the Wanderers. Maidenhead won the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary match 3-1.

2011-12 season saw the club reach the 1st round proper of the FA Cup where they were drawn against Aldershot Town from League 2. This was the first time in their history that Maidenhead had been drawn at home to a league club in the competition proper. In front of a crowd of 2,281, the Magpies took the lead in the eighth minute through Anthony Thomas before the visitors secured a draw with a goal from Michael Rankine twelve minutes from the end. The Shots won the replay at the Recreation Ground ten days later by 2-0. On the field, the league season ended in bitter disappointment as the club finished in 20<sup>th</sup> place and was relegated back to the Southern League. However, the demise of Kettering Town saw the Magpies reprieved and they remained members of Conference South in 2012/13 season. Despite a decent start to that campaign, relegation was always a threat in the final few months of the season but the club eventually finished 19th just one point ahead of the drop zone. In 2013-14, Maidenhead again flirted with relegation and only achieved safety on the last day of the season. In March 2014, the stand on the railway side of the ground was demolished and a new 550 seat stand erected in its place, opened in July 2014. 2014/15 season ended with the club again just finishing above the relegation zone in Conference South with Johnson Hippolyte's nine year tenure as manager ending with his 445<sup>th</sup> match as manager at the 2015 Berks & Bucks Cup final against Aylesbury United which Maidenhead won 4-0. Hippolyte was replaced by Alan Devonshire, who rejoined the Magpies after twelve years as Manager of Hampton & Richmond Borough and Braintree Town.



### Club Records:

**Most competitive appearances:** Brian Pitts (far left) **544+6** (April 1960 – August 1971)

**Highest competitive goalscorer:** George Copas **270** (in 299 appearances)

**Record victory:** 14-1 v Buckingham Town (home) (Amateur Cup), 6th September 1952

**Record defeat:** 0-14 v Chesham United (away) (Spartan League) 31st March 1923