



COXA FOOTBALL CLUB

The following is a brief history of COXA Football Club from its early days.

Clapham College opened in Nightingale Lane in 1897, and in 1927, the Old Boys' association was formed. Records show that COXA had a football team before 1939, playing friendlies.

After the war, the association revived its football team and eventually joined the OBFL. The founder members were – Don Kulvihill, John Woollard, Tony Brinn, Steve and Maurice Ward. Regular players included Dennis Gamber, Freddie Walsh, John Flynn and Ted Hughes.

In the 1950's, a second x1 joined the league, with home matches being played on the two Norbury pitches. The teams were not always successful, but had great enthusiasm, with stalwarts like, John Cernuschi, Denis Quin, Pat Breslin, Henry Pincent, Ron Lewis, Ron Tomasina, Ted Newman and Peter Dixon. By now, Derek Rowe was the Hon. Sec. – a position he held for nearly forty years until his death in 1992.

The early 1960's saw a complete transformation in the fortunes of the Football Club. With the influx of new players like John Keenan, Tony Amura, Phil Leeder and John McGuire, the 1st x1 won promotion in four successive years, and won the Surrey Senior Cup in 1966. It could be argued that the forward line of Tony Amura, Keith Proctor and Frank Hixon was one of the best COXA ever produced. In the late 1960's, the Norbury pitches were dug up for drainage, and COXA played at Priest Hill and Rose Hill for two seasons. By the end of the 1960s, a 3rd x1 had joined the league.

The 1970's saw the start of a golden age for Clapham football. Under Captains, Mick McGrath, Dave Murtagh and John Mansi, the 1st X1 continued to win promotion. By the end of the 1970's, we had 6 teams in the league and the Clubhouse sold out of beer every week. The culmination of this success was John Mansi's team winning the Surrey Senior Cup in 1979, with such stars as, Frank Barretta, John McNicholas, Wilson Bowers, Chris Taylor and Paul and Tim Hixon.

By the 1980's we had 8 teams in the league, and a 9th x1 playing friendlies. The 1st x1 reached the Premier Division, and in 1986 won the Old Boy's Cup, under the captaincy of Brian Casey. The team, perhaps the best ever, included John Leathem, John McGowan, Charlie Bond, Dave Leathem, Jim Thornton, and Tom McLoughlin.

At this point, it has to be said that Old Boy's Football is not just about 1st x1s. Many of Clapham's sides below the 1st x1 won League titles and cups.



Prominent Captains have been – Scotty McDonald, Alan Webber, Chris Megoran, Chez, Eamon Kearns, Aide De Coursey, Ashley Pitter, Gerry Lambe, Dan Condon, and the never to be forgotten Steve Brady,. Still playing today are Bernie Mensah, Matt Benedict and Paul Bailey.

By the 1990s, it was becoming harder to recruit players, because the college closed in 1987. We were using the Norbury pitch and Powerleague or Purley Way for home games. We were down to six sides, but the 1st x1 hung onto its Premier place until the late 90s, thanks to the efforts of Serge Cefai, Mark Conneely and Paul and Arthur Williams. One innovation at this time was that John Mansi ran an Under-16 team as the 4th X1, thus bringing into the club – Joe Mansi, Mike Garvey and Richard Williams.

2000 saw us out of the Premier Division, but refusing to go into decline. John Mansi took over running the 1st x1, and won successive promotions, as well as the Surrey Senior Cup in 2006 (under skipper, Steve Gordon). In 2009, Matt Arnold took Clapham back to the Premier Division. Life in this current season will not be easy, but we have high hopes of the 1st x1. It has to be emphasised that some of Clapham's best players in recent years have been as good as any in our history – Paul Hamilton, Luke Roszkowski, Mick Gorman and Peter Codd.

Over the years, several players have played more than 500 games for COXA (this would take about 30 seasons), Pete Brown, John McGuire, Vic Roszkowski and Colin Garvey have all reached this milestone. Colin Brown must overtake them all soon, as well as being the top goal scorer. John Leathem and serge Cefai must be close.

Finally, on the social side, Clapham have come a long way from those early days, when, after the match, they went to the Sussex Arms in Norbury, because we had no clubhouse. The Old Clubhouse was built in 1960 by Don Mulvihill and Denis Quin. It was small but soon became full of beer, songs and 'BREN-Burgers'. In the late 1970's we enjoyed the pavilion to accommodate the present bar. Some great nights followed, none mightier than the night when 6 teams came back, having won promotion. Let's hope these traditions will continue in the future.

No history of our club would be complete without paying tribute to Eddie O'Brien, who has held the Football section together since his early days, more than 30 years ago.

Colin Garvey 2009