

Merstham – Recent History

The 2007/08 season, Mick Sullivan's seventh year in charge, brought the club into a new era with a treble winning side, a fantastic run in the FA Vase and promotion to the Isthmian League South Division as they finally finished top after two seasons as runners up. After losing on the opening day of the season at Cove, Merstham went undefeated in the league for the rest of the season winning 35 times, gaining 111 points and scoring 114 goals with Kevin Lock and Kwabena Agyei scoring 53 between them. The dream of a Wembley final in the FA Vase vanished in the Quarter Final when they lost at home to Needham Market 2-3 in extra time in front of 841. Merstham successfully defended the Premier Challenge Cup beating Bedfont Green 4-2 in the final. In the Surrey Senior Cup final against Whyteleafe, the Moatsiders won 3-2 in extra time after twice trailing.

At the 2008/09 was Merstham's first season in the Isthmian South and they had a good season finishing eighth, narrowly missing out the play-offs. Their defence of their Surrey Senior Cup title was ended by Woking in the semi-final. However, in May manager Mick Sullivan announced that, after eight seasons at the helm, he was leaving to manage Leatherhead. After a couple of indifferent seasons, in January 2012, the Board announced that former Bromley manager Hayden Bird would take charge. Bird rang the changes, bringing in several new players and Merstham finished a creditable ninth.

The 2012/13 was Bird's first full season in charge and it didn't quite live up to expectations with Merstham finishing 12th and without a noticeable run in any cup completion. Bird again rang the changes for the 2013/14 season bringing in more experienced players and Merstham attained their highest place in the club's history, finishing seventh with their highest tally of points and goals since gaining promotion to the Isthmian League

The 2014/15 season was to be the best in the club's history to date, gaining promotion to the Isthmian Premier Division by winning the play-offs in style and finishing runners up in the Surrey Senior Cup. Merstham's fourth place finish with 93 points and 107 goals put them into the play-offs. The play off semi-final went to penalties, which Merstham won 5-4 thanks to keeper Brannon Daly's save. In front of 1465 at Folkestone, Merstham gained promotion by beating the home side 3-0. Just four days later, a tired-looking Merstham lost 2-0 in the final of the Surrey Senior Cup to Met Police. The 2015/16 season saw the team attaining their highest-ever position in senior football finishing tenth in their first season in The Isthmian Premier League. This was in part due to 20 goals from Charlie Penny and 14 from Fabio Saraiva who were then both signed by Woking after dumping the National League side out in the semis of the Surrey Senior Cup. The final was very one-sided, as Godalming Town were thumped 4-1.

In Merstham's second season in the Isthmian Premier, the Moatsiders reached the First Round Proper of the FA Cup for the first time in their history. They beat East Preston (4-1), Colliers Wood Utd (2-1 in a replay), Thamesmead Town (5-1) and Ebbsfleet Utd (2-1) on the way to a meeting with League One side Oxford United. A record-breaking crowd of 1,920 packed into the Moatside, but Merstham seemed a little over-awed and lost 5-0. After the euphoria of the cup run, the season spiralled downward and the club narrowly avoided relegation on the last day of the season.

During the close season Bird made wholesale changes to his squad. The 2017/18 season saw the club celebrate its 125th anniversary, finish 12th in the league and for the second time in four years, win the Surrey Senior Cup, beating Leatherhead 3-1. The 2018/19 was Merstham's best-ever season in the topflight. At Christmas, the side were flirting with relegation, but a superb run saw the Moatsiders put themselves into the hunt for the play offs. They finished the season needing to win away to Worthing to get into the play offs. Amazingly the visitors went 3-0 up inside the first ten minutes and held on for a 4-2 win. In the play-off semi-final, away to Carshalton, the Moatsiders shocked the Robins with a 2-1 win, which set up a play-off final away to Tonbridge Angels in front of a crowd of 2,400. It turned out to be a physical and dour encounter marred by a double sending off just before the interval with Merstham's Ollie Cook given his marching orders. Tonbridge scored on 34' and the Moatsiders rarely looked like getting back on terms. A penalty in added time was largely irrelevant as the Angels clinched the play-off spot with a 2-0 win. Shortly after the play-off final, Bird left to join Kingstonian, taking the entire first-team squad with him. Former Tooting and Mitcham boss Frank Wilson was appointed in June 2019 and had to build a brand-new squad from scratch.

No one could have predicted the impact of Covid-19 as the pandemic swept the world just as the 2019/20 season neared its conclusion. Wilson had endured a real baptism of fire as his new team struggled to maintain their Premier League status. As the pandemic surged throughout the UK, football was no longer a priority and when the season was finally curtailed, with all records being expunged, Merstham were fighting relegation and sat in 21st place, although with home games against relegation rivals to play, most were confident that the drop could be avoided. The 20/21 season lasted just 11 games before the surge in Covid cases brought the new season to an inevitable halt.

When football finally returned at the start of the 2021/22 season, the Moatsiders made a decent start in the league and progressed through two rounds of the FA Cup before losing at home to Hereford United. In November, the team had a purple patch of form with the front two of Korrey Henry and John Ufuah forming a lethal combination and the team playing some superb football. In the home game against Haringey, Merstham were 5-0 up at the interval! However, other clubs had taken note and Ufuah departed for the Welsh Premiership and Henry to Carshalton. Without their front two, the Moatsiders struggled to score goals and combined with a horrendous run of injuries that reduced the squad to the bare bones, Merstham began to slide down the table. The team lost their final 13 league games and relegation was confirmed on the final day of the season. Wilson departed and he was replaced for the 2022/23 season by former Carshalton boss and ex-Merstham midfielder, Peter Adeniyi.

Merstham were one of the favourites for promotion from the Isthmian South Central in 2022/3. However, Adeniyi's young, new team failed to fire and after ten games, the team were bottom of the table and remained there for much of the season. A bad habit of drawing games that they should have won didn't help as the team eventually ended up with 17 draws from 38 games. A prime example was away to Southall when the Moatsiders were 3-1 up in added time but ended up drawing 3-3! The team seemed to have turned a corner around the New Year with an unbeaten run of 6 games, but only one of those was a win. As the season drew to a close, Merstham had their fate in their own hands with games against others around them in the relegation zone. But a damaging defeat at Sutton Common Rovers and a disappointing home draw with Bedfont Sports followed by a 6-0 thumping at Walton & Hersham put them back in trouble. A fighting performance and a 90th minute winner at Chertsey meant it was all to play for in the final league game of the season at home to Westfield. After 45 minutes the Moatsiders were 2-0 down and staring relegation in the face. However, a stirring second half display earned them a point with a 2-2 draw. It condemned Merstham to a relegation play off against an in-form Egham Town. In front of over 650 spectators, Merstham conceded first but on the stroke of half time, Aaron Goode powered home a header to make it 1-1. After the break it was all Merstham and two goals by Adam Adam guaranteed survival.

At the end of the season, Adeniyi announced he was returning to manage Carshalton and former Moatsider Tony Reid was appointed manager. The FA also decided (without any consultation) to move the team into the Isthmian South-East Division, thought by many to be a far tougher league. Reid got off to a poor start and when his side was dumped out of the Velocity Trophy with a 6-1 defeat, the Board decided a change was needed and appointed K's assistant manager, Jamie Decruz. Decruz's first match in charge saw the team go in at half time 3-0 down at home to Beckenham, but a stirring second half comeback saw the Moatsiders grab a dramatic 4-3 win. That game was a microcosm of the season, with the side consistently inconsistent. There were with some notable wins, for example 2-0 at league leaders Ramsgate, but losing to most of sides at the bottom of the table kept the team flirting with the relegation zone. The most bizarre game was a 6-6 draw at Broadbridge Heath, when the Moatsiders led 2-0, 4-2, 5-4 and then fell behind 6-5 before an equaliser in the 94th minute! It wasn't until a thumping 5-0 home win against Sevenoaks at the start of April that the club could finally breathe a sigh of relief and look forward to another season in the Isthmian SE.

First Team Honours

Redhill & District League: Division Two Champions 1927

East Surrey Junior Cup: Winners 1930

Redhill & District League: Premier Division Champions 1934-35, 1935-36, 1949-50, 1950-51

Surrey Intermediate League: Champions 1952-53

Surrey Senior Charity Cup: Winners 1976-77

London Spartan Challenge Cup: Winners 1979-80

East Surrey Charities Cup: Winners 1980-81, 1998-99, 2004-05, 2006-07
Dan Air Class Elite Cup: Winners 1989-90
Surrey Veterans County Cup: Winners 1995-96
Premier Challenge Cup: Winners 2004-05, 2006-07, 2007-08 Runners-Up 2005-06
Combined Counties Premier Division Champions 2007-08
FA Vase: Quarter Finalists 2007-08
Surrey Senior Cup: Winners 2007-08, 2015-16, 2017-18
Ryman League Division One South Fair Play Award: Winners 2010-11
Ryman League South Play-Off Winners 2014-15
Ryman Premier League Play-Off Runners Up 2018-19