



04/04/2024

Football Club Report – Annual Parish Meeting 2024

As we move into April, we should be looking forward to the end of the current season, but at present that still feels some distance away. The rain arrived at the start of October and has totally decimated our season since. Across the club we still have many fixtures to play but the pitches remain heavily waterlogged and struggling to drain, with no prolonged break in the weather in sight. This season has certainly been the worst for weather related postponements in all of the 25 years that we have been reformed.

When we have managed to play, progress on the pitch has again been impressive, belying our status as a small village club.

At the end of 2022/23, the senior team finished 4th in Duchy League Division Two which was enough to secure promotion to a much tougher league within a new structure. Many of the young players have now established themselves in adult football and are comfortable competing against much older, more experienced players. At present the team sits 7th out of 13 in the new league which is a great effort against some big clubs with strong teams. We thank Jason and Cindy at the Old Orchard Inn for continuing to provide after match refreshment, and to all the supporters that have come out to watch on a Saturday.

This season we expanded to four youth teams, U14's, U11's, U9's and our newly formed U7's.

The U14's continue to be competitive in their league, finishing 4th last year with a similar position looking likely again this season. They have handled the step up to 11-a-side, on a bigger pitch and playing in bigger goals very well, and we've been able to use the increased numbers to give more players longer game time, which in turn has helped them develop further.

The U11's have picked up wins throughout the season and continue to improve. They too have made the step up to 9-a-side, with larger goals and are getting their first taste of the offside rule.

The U9's have now had a year of experience and got to grips with playing in competitive matches. They were placed into a more suitable league this year and as a result have developed well, producing some impressive performances with a lot more success.

The new U7's started the season on fire and were producing high-scoring wins, to the point that the leagues were re-shuffled at Christmas and they now find themselves in the top tier. While games since have been limited, it is good that they are now getting tested against the best as this will only serve to keep them at the top as they progress through the age groups.



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In total we currently have 55 children registered to play in league matches and a further 10/12 that train with the squads. They all work exceptionally hard, and it is testament to them that they are competing against teams from the big towns such as Newquay, Wadebridge and Bodmin, where they have much larger catchment areas and the children seem to be twice the size!

After investing over £4000 in drainage and sanding works over the past couple of years, and with winter astroturf hire costs increasing, our funds are diminishing so we've been unable to undertake any further drainage work this season. We have however invested in a small tow along aerator to help relieve surface compaction, aerate the topsoil and stimulate better root growth. We also had to purchase new 21x7 and 17x6 folding aluminium goals to allow the U14's and U11's to carry on playing. To do so we acquired a 74% grant from the Football Foundation, and to raise the balance, held a race night at the Old Orchard Inn back in October. This raised £1,080 and just covered our shortfall, a big thank you to Sarah Wickett for all her hard work in organising the event.

Unfortunately, as seems to be becoming more regular, we have been on the receiving end of some negative press this year. Two anonymous letters have been received over the course of the season targeting our operations. In both instances the content has been misinformed, inaccurate or only highlighted occurrences that have taken place for the whole of the previous 25 years without any previous issue. We made an appeal to the person/persons behind it to contact us privately to discuss, but they have failed to do so. Therefore, we can only assume that this is faceless cowardice designed to cause trouble for us and further detract from the positive work we are trying to do. In-turn it is incredibly disappointing that small-minded attitudes like this exist in our small tight-knit community. On a personal level, all our volunteers give up countless hours to try and provide these children with a purpose, an activity to keep them fit and healthy, to experience what it is like to be part of a team, to learn new skills and to make friends for life. We suspect the person(s) behind the letters fails to acknowledge this, nor recognise being proud that the village provides this benefit to so many, which is disappointing and disheartening for us. But while they are a minority, we have been inundated with messages of support and encouragement for us to continue, from both parishioners old and new.

To conclude, we thank all our sponsors and supporters, and a big thank you to Trevor for continuing to cut the grass at the playing field and for his hard work in keeping the field looking well presented.

Week St Mary FC Committee