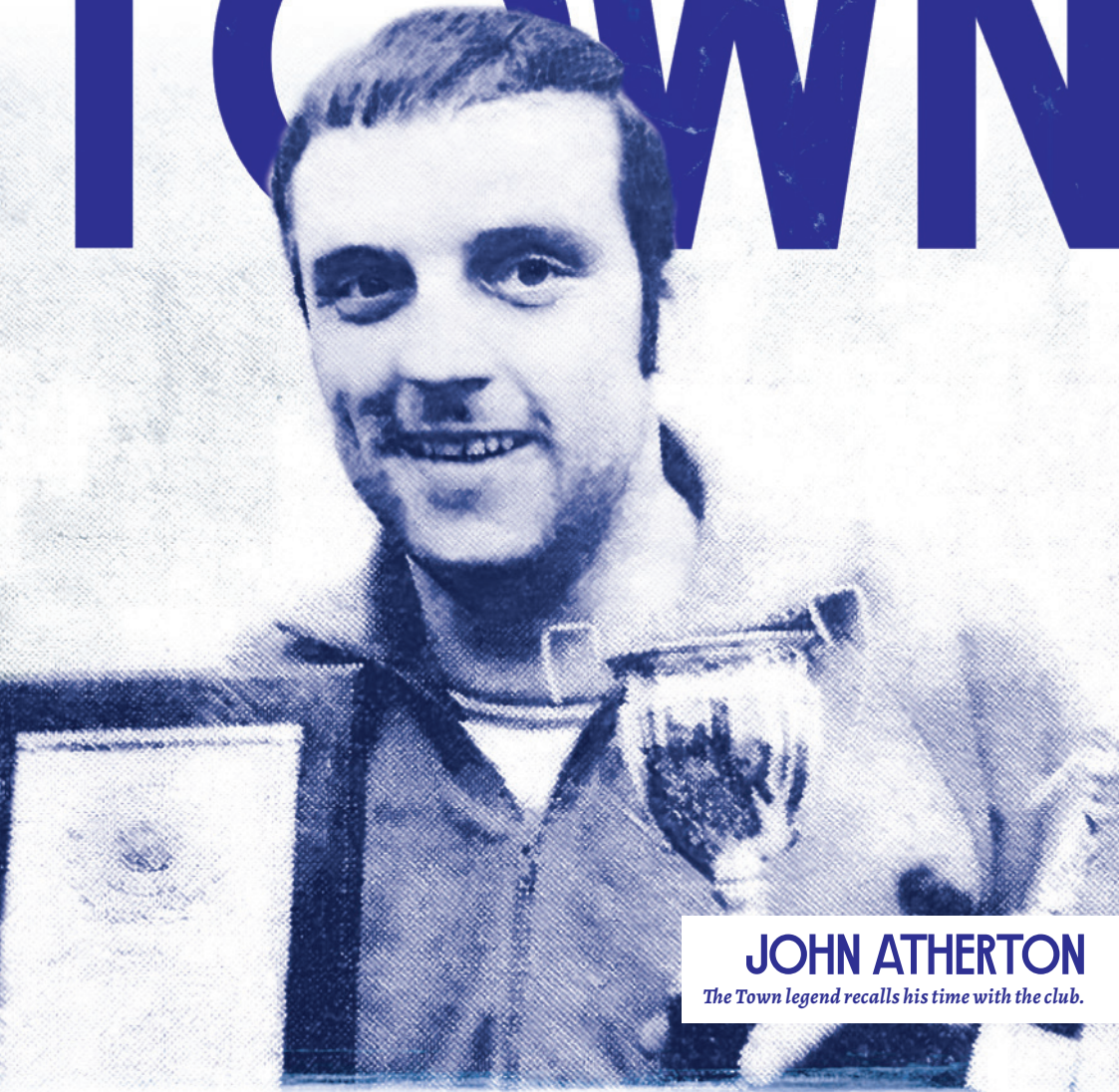


TOWN



JOHN ATHERTON

The Town legend recalls his time with the club.

Saturday 15th February 2025 - £2



ST HELENS TOWN A.F.C.

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FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to The PSD Stadium at Ruskin Drive for our first home game for three months - that's right, three months. It is very good to be back.

A warm welcome to our visitors Newton Athletic, just over a month since we played the fixture at their ground in Chester, in near freezing conditions. Fingers crossed that this afternoon is a couple of degrees warmer than that, for the benefit of all concerned.

In the long period since our last home game, we have had two others scheduled and cancelled due to very poor weather. One of these included Newton's planned visit in early December, when former Town Captain Johnny Atherton was due to be our guest of honour.

It was very disappointing to miss out on that, but we caught up with him at our Christmas get-together at the Lamb later that month. It was a pleasure to spend time with him and other former players, and to see some of our current players chatting with them, enriching their sense of the Club as a whole.

We're proud to feature John on the cover of this programme, and a special article about him.

The Cheshire League fixtures for March were announced this week, giving us a run of seven Saturdays in a row with games, five of them at home. With the prospect of (slightly) warmer weather, and so many fixtures on artificial pitches, we should finally have the opportunity to resume the kind of rhythm we achieved in the Autumn.

The same applies to our U23s, who have been able to play only two competitive matches since November. They now have six consecutive matches, which can only benefit them.

In this period we will see some more of our current U18s squad training with the open aged teams, as part of their ongoing development towards open aged

football, Carlos and Matt (U18s and U23s managers, respectively) will be working closely together on this, as it is an important part of the Club's approach.

Finally, this week we heard the sad news that Jimmy Barrett, one of our Honorary Vice Presidents, is quite unwell. Jimmy has been a Town stalwart over a period of decades, including a long period as Chairman and in a variety of other roles. He has also been the font of knowledge on the Club's history, quoted in many articles and other publications, and has represented the Town at many important events - including the parade of past winners held at the 2000 FA Vase Final at Wembley.

We wish Jimmy and his family all the very best during the current difficulties, and remember fondly the not-too-distant days when he was still able to join us at matches here at Ruskin.

Come on the Town!

Ste Lingard



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A WORD WITH THE MANAGER

Myself and the club would like to welcome everyone from Newton Athletic to Ruskin Drive this afternoon.

No matter what the score is, we hope you'll join us after the game for refreshments in The Wicket bar.

Firstly may I wish everyone a Happy New Year!
(Not really, it's halfway through February - Ed.)

Well here we go. After an absolute eternity of away games and cancelled home games, we finally return to the PSD Rentals stadium.

We welcome Newton here today who we played a few weeks back, in what was a really tough game on a tight pitch and they played it really well. So we know it will be another tough test.

We suffered our first defeat of the season a couple of weeks ago against a strong Stretford Paddock team, who on the day fully deserved their victory in the cup. The disappointment from us as a management team is that we never turned up for this game, despite the amazing effort of the fans who made the journey and had a fantastic day out.

Fast forward a week, and we turned out in the Liverpool Cup quarter final against a good Rainhill Town side. We certainly did turn up in this game, turning in a fantastic performance and running out 5-1 winners.

During this time away, we have continued to add quality and experience to the squad welcoming in Olly Filson who is an unbelievable player and has dropped down from NWCF to join us. Along with recent signings Will Clapham, Elliot Morris the squad is brimming with quality.

Our focus over the next few weeks is back on the league and our determination to get to the goal we set ourselves at the beginning of the season. We will continue to take one game at a time, and

improve with every game doing things our way.

Thank you for your continued support and let's make it nice and noisy for the lads.

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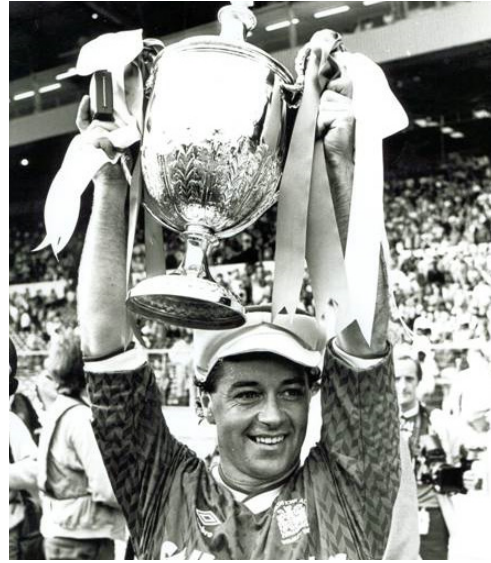
A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOWN

The original St. Helens Town club was formed in 1901 and played at Park Road, behind the Primrose Vaults public house. Although it was known as the Primrose Ground, the players changed further down Park Road at the Black Horse pub. Playing in the Lancashire League and Lancashire Combination, the team enjoyed some early success, but struggled after the Great War and appears to have folded midway through the 1928/29 season.

The club was re-formed by George Fryer and a group of local businessmen in 1946. They took out a lease of the former cricket ground at Hoghton Road, Sutton, adjacent to the St. Helens Junction railway station and, although it entered in the FA Cup in the 1946/47 season, a team could not be raised in time to fulfil its tie with Prescot Cables.

Friendly games were played, then local team Derbyshire Hill Rovers were taken over in April 1947, those players forming the nucleus of the team which entered the Liverpool County Combination at the start of the 1947/48 season. St. Helens Town soon began to prosper and early results included a sensational 10-4 win over Everton "A" on 6th December 1947. Former German prisoner-of-war Bert Trautmann joined the club in the Summer of 1948, the strapping goalkeeper helping the team to win its first trophy, the George Mahon Cup, which was secured with a 2-1 win over Runcorn at Prescot on 7th May 1949. Crowds averaged over 2000 that season, peaking with a league record attendance of 3012 against Burscough in October 1948.

The following season, 1949/50, Town entered the Lancashire Combination and, despite losing Trautmann to Manchester City in October 1949, they won the Second Division title in some style the



following season, three players, Albert Leadbetter (36), Harry McCann (32) and Terry Garner (31) all netting over 30 goals apiece. An all-time club record attendance of "between 8000 and 9000" witnessed a friendly game against Manchester City, arranged as part of the Trautmann transfer deal, in April 1950 and another 4000 witnessed a second match with City the following season.

Although relegated by a slender margin from the First Division in 1951/52, the club continued to look forward, even contemplating Football League status and, in order to further its ambitions, moved to the former St. Helens Recs. rugby league ground at City Road. Initial crowds were encouraging but, despite success, the club decided to move back to Hoghton Road in October 1953, where they remained until April 2000.

Town produced a number of fine players who joined Football League clubs, including Bill Foulkes (Manchester United), John Quinn (Sheffield Wednesday) and John Connelly who joined Burnley, later transferring to Manchester United and who played in the England 1966 World Cup winning squad. More recently, Dave Bamber scored goals in all four divisions of the league with a host of different clubs, starting and ending

his league career at Blackpool and in more recent times, Karl Ledsham, who had a productive career at conference level with Southport, Lincoln City, Barrow and Stockport County before moving to the USA.

Following a second relegation in 1956, St. Helens Town continued to play in the Lancashire Combination, winning the Championship in 1971/72, by nine points ahead of Accrington Stanley.

However, the formation of the Northern Premier League in 1968 led to a gradual drain of stronger clubs from the Combination and St. Helens joined the Cheshire League in 1975, becoming founder members of the North West Counties League seven years later. They held the proud record of being the only club



to play in the NW Counties' top flight every season until they were relegated in April 2015, conceding an injury-time equaliser to Silsden in the last game of the season, a match they had to win to stay up.

Town enjoyed a golden era in the late 1980s, just missing out on an appearance in the First Round proper of the FA Cup in 1985/86, losing to Morecambe in a Fourth Qualifying Round Replay, but they obtained ample compensation by winning the FA Vase at Wembley in 1987, beating near neighbours Warrington Town 3-2, with two goals from Phil Layhe and one from Brian Rigby.

They were regular promotion candidates for many years, largely due to the scoring exploits of Steve "Pellet" Pennington, who grabbed 216 goals in 351 games, his season's best hauls of 45 in 1993/94 and 46 in 1997/98 just failing to beat the club record of 47 scored by Phil Stainton in 1963/64. Former club captain Andy Gillespie won the NW Counties' golden boot with 34 goals in the 2015/16 season and netted another 24 times the following season.

Town moved from Hoghton Road in 2000 to ground share with St. Helens RFC, as part of the merger into the new Sporting Club St. Helens. Developing the new Saints stadium took years longer than anticipated, and when Knowsley Road closed in 2010 Town became nomads, plaig variously at Ashton Town, Ashton Athletic, Prescot Cables and Atherton Collieries. Town returned to St. Helens Borough in August 2017, playing on a 3G surface at Ruskin Drive, after St. Helens Council redeveloped the facilities.

The 2021-22 season saw Town in the NW CFL First Division North. It was a disastrous campaign, with only four wins and four draws from 36 league games. The club finished bottom of the table, 21 points adrift, and was relegated to the Liverpool County Premier League.

A consortium of Town fans bought the club from St. Helens RFC in Summer 2022. They took the decision to move it to the Cheshire League, believing it offered the most constructive environment in which to rebuild the club. It was a difficult decision, however, as it involved having to start at the bottom of that league system, a further two divisions down. The 2023/24 season was the first in the Cheshire League.

The rebuild is ongoing.

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CULTURE VULTURE

WHO SPONGES THE SPONGE MAN?

Welcome, as always, to the PSD Stadium at Ruskin Drive.

With our last December home fixture against local rivals Haydock postponed it's been a long time since we played a first team fixture at home. Here's a little catch up of the work our community arm Town in the Town has been up to.

On Sunday, December 29th, we hosted our annual Town Reunion once again at The Lamb Inn on Corporation Street, St Helens. It was great to see so many faces connected to the club—supporters, former players, or simply those curious about what we've been up to.

Following the success of last year's event, we hope to see familiar faces returning as well as some new ones. This reunion is not only a celebration of our historic football club but also a wonderful opportunity for people to reconnect with old friends, colleagues, and teammates. Looking ahead, we aim to develop more regular events in 2025 to ensure we continue supporting

everyone connected to the club, past and present.

Meanwhile, our sister club, Hope United of St Helens—a team comprised of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants new to our town—was in action on Wednesday afternoon at the PSD Stadium. They faced a similar team from Warrington in a highly competitive match, which ended in a 3-2 victory for Hope United.

Next up for our Hope boys is a mini tournament over at Anfield Sports against teams from both Liverpool FC and Birmingham City FC respective foundation's. The boys mix in high circles.

Now, without further ado, let's move on to the main feature of this program's Culture Vulture section. As always, this section of the programme celebrates the history and culture of our town and our club.

Today, we spotlight one of our legends, John 'Jackie' Atherton.



Graham Hickson and Alan Wellens at last year's reunion at The Lamb

JOHN ATHERTON INTERVIEW

You may recognise John from our legends boards at Ruskin Drive, where he represents the 1960s era as a club icon. We were delighted when John's daughter, Julie, reached out to us via Facebook.

To honour his legacy, we thought it fitting to send a few questions to this no-nonsense center-half from Haydock. With input from across the club, we've compiled some questions about John's time at Town.

Andy Langley (Club matchday announcer)
Back in the 60s what was the connection like between the club and the town, with the social club at Town ground being a major venue in the borough?

When I first joined St Helens Town the club was a large wooden building nothing like today. The fans we had were all local from St Helens & Sutton area. We had about 80/100 steadfast fans. The club was used for Presentation nights, after training sessions & at the weekend after home games. The fans were always welcome in for a pint after the game & it was usually in the lounge.

John Lingard (former team mate)
A question I like to ask of former players is, to name the best eleven they played with? Not that I am anticipating I could

be in is eleven. I change my eleven around a bit but Johnny Atherton is constantly my Centre Half.
Jackie Critchley (goal) Alan Wellens, L Madgin, Eric Lesbill, D Hennin, Graham Hickson, Gerry Poole, M Bull, K Harding, G Aspinall, Eric Atherton (no relation).

Paul Piert (current Town manager)
What's your proudest moment in a town shirt?
Scoring an hatrick against Skelmersdale United in the Lancashire Combination. Also winning the Lancashire Combination Championships 71/72.

Ste Ball (Town committee, fan since 1973)
Who was the best striker you played with at Town?
M Bull

Lee Jenkinson (former Town manager)
With myself not being from Town, when I was appointed manager I felt so much pride in taking the job and that is down to players like yourself John who created a lot of history. So what was it like as a local lad to play 327 times for the club?
I was really proud every time I pulled the shirt on. I always gave 100% which the fans always appreciated.

Jimmy McBride (former manager)
Hi John ... with the pitches now like carpets & boots &

footballs lighter than they've ever been how do you think you'd have faired in the modern game & do you think the games better now with all the modern technology like VAR?
It's a completely different ball game now. In my days you owned 1 pair of football boots and heading the ball felt like heading a cannon ball. The Town Ground unfortunately always had a heavy surface. I don't think I would have faired so well in today's modern game as I always got stuck in with my tackling. Consequently, this meant a lot of bookings. I am not a fan of VAR I feel it is being used in the wrong way.

Ste Lingard (Chairman)
What are the ingredients for a happy and motivated dressing room?
Success & a good backroom staff. Along with a good Manager.

What are your memories of the Lancashire Combination winning season?
We went through the season only losing 1 game. It was a real Team effort with a good squad of players & Manager.

What was the biggest challenge you faced as Captain?
Keeping the Team spirit up when we lost but fortunately for us it was quite rare.

Mike Bagshaw (Media Manager)
In your time at Town you must've come across some characters in the changing room. Can you name any and a particularly funny (remembering we're a family club) story you'd like to share?
There's 1 incident that I can remember when we were playing away at Fleetwood Town. One of our players went down injured and Frank Sutton,



our sponge man, was about to run on and see to him. Unfortunately, as he jumped up he banged his head on the bar of dugout and knocked himself out. Hence, Fleetwood's sponge man had to attend to Frank to bring him round. I think our player must have recovered.

I'd like to personally thank John for taking the time to answer our questions. I wish him, Julie, and the entire family a wonderful visit to Ruskin today and all the very best for the New Year.

Finally, I'd like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, and I look forward to seeing you all in 2025!

Up The Town and as always stay cultured.

Mike Bagshaw
Culture Culture



St Helens Town AFC - 1969-70

Standing Left to Right: Peter Jones (Manager), Len Allen, George Davies, Dave Hegarty, John Atherton
Kneeling Left to Right: John Lingard, Not Known, Eric Moore, Ernie ?????



It is a great moment to end a great season — president Mr Wesley Bridge presents the Lancashire Combination Cup to St Helens Town captain, Alan Wellens, in the half-time break of their last game against Corinthians (Münthorpe) last night. Town finished Champions after losing only one game — against Kirkby Town. A goal after five minutes from Ian Woods was enough to beat Corinthians.

MEET A MERT!

WILL CLAPHAM

Age: 20 Position: Winger / #10

Who do you support? Everton

Best player of all time? Messi

Best ever goal? Scored 3 at Goodison Park Cup Final
(I think the question got muddled up here – Ed.)

Best ever kit? Chelsea Home 2023/24

Favourite other sport? Rugby

Best thing about Tellins?

Womble Inn Butchers - best Salt & Pepper chicken in
Stellens (Not sure if this a typo or new slang for Tellins – Ed)

What are you watching?

Fight Club

What are you listening to?

Country music - Zach Bryan

THE SQUAD

Who's the biggest moaner? Ryan Cook

Worst dancer? Ellis Morris

Worst tattoo? Charlie Leach

Cleverest? Max Buckley-Benbow

Worst dressed? Pacey Garrett

Worst haircut? Jake Sant

Who would you least like to be

stuck in a lift with? Pacey

Who would you want with you if you

were stuck on a desert island? Jenko

Tightest with money? Pacey

Laziest? Charlie Leach



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Scott Williams **MID**
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Ryan Cook **FWD**
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BEAT THE YICKER

Answers at the bottom of the page.

1. Everton defender Jarrad Branthwaite had a season as which Dutch club?
2. Joseph Desire Job opened the scoring for which club as they won the Carling cup in 2004?
3. Which league 1 club are nicknamed The Stags?
4. Town striker Liam Diggie had a spell at which current Liverpool based North West Counties League club?
5. What is the technical term for the strength of a clubs floodlights. Is it A, Flux, B, Lex or C, Lux?
6. Which English Clubs Stadium is partly in Wales?
7. Who where the Striking duo SAS?
8. Which Cheshire League club play in the village of Culceth?
9. How many point did Manchester City amass in winning last seasons Premier League title?
10. In the first ever Premier League season, which club finished bottom?



TOWN IN ACTION

Newton Athletic 2 - 2 Town - January 4th

Photos by Mary Castrogiovanni



Captain Luke Diggie scores



Scott Williams



Pacey Garrett



Dale Whitehead

1. PSV Eindhoven, 2. Middlesboro, 3. Mansfield Town, 4. Litherland Remyca, 5. Lux, 6. Cheshire, 7. Sutton And Shearer, 8. Daren, 9, 91, 10. Nottingham Forest

TOWN IN ACTION

Stretford Paddock 4 - 0 Town - February 1st

Photos by Mary Castrogiovanni



Jake Sant



Ryan Cook



Chris Foster



Max Buckley-Benbow



Liam Diggle



Archie Hanson



Charlie Leach



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Chair: Ste Lingard

Vice-Chair: Neil Hitchen

Vice-Chair: Gavin Scott

Secretary: Paul Styles

Treasurer: Ste Lingard

Commercial Manager: Gavin Scott

Media Manager: Michael Bagshaw

Committee

Michael Bagshaw, Steve Ball, Daniel Castrogiovanni, Kenny Dixon, Gill Ellison, Michael Featherstone, Neil Hitchen, Annmarie Houghton, Ste Lingard, David O'Keefe, Gavin Scott, Paul Styles.

Management Staff

1st Team Manager: Paul 'Peo' Piert

Assistant Manager: Martin Seddon

1st Team Coach: Danny Hughes

U23s Manager: Matt Birchall

U23s Assistant Manager: Joe Bone

U18s Manager: Carlos Rodrigues

U18s Assistant Manager: Dave Pallett

U18s Secretary: Fiona Sharrock

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- 1973** Bass Charrington Cup Winners
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- 1978** St Helens Hospital Cup Winners
- 1979** St Helens Combination Div 1 Runners Up
- 1979** St Helens Hospital Cup Runners Up
- 1980** St Helens Combination Div 1 Champions
- 1985** NWCFL Reserve Division 2 Runners Up
- 1986** NWCFL Reserve Division 1 Runners Up
- 1987** FA Vase Winners (Wembley)
- 1994** League Challenge Cup Finalists
- 1994** NWCFL Reserve Division Runners Up
- 1995** NWCFL Reserve Division Champions
- 1996** NWCFL Reserve Division Runners Up
- 1998** Floodlit Trophy Finalists
- 1999** REALCO Fair Play Award Winners
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- 2014-15** Cheshire FA U21 League Champions
- 2015-16** Cheshire FA U21 Premier Cup Finalists
- 2016-17** Cheshire FA U21 League Cup Finalists
- 2016-17** Cheshire FA U21 Premier Div Runners Up
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- 2020-21** NWYA U18s President's Cup Winners

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- 8000** at Houghton Road v Man City (1950)
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- 2096** at Langtree Park v Wigan Town (2023)
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1999-00, 2000-01
- NWCFL Premier Division
2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15
- NWCFL First Division / First Division North
2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20
- Wirral Programme Club National Survey
NWCFL Programme of the Year
1996-97, 1997-98, 1998-99
- Programme Monthly
NWCFL Programme of the Year 2007-08
- Soccer Club Swap Shop
National Programme Awards
2010-11 28th, 2011-12 8th,
2012-13 7th, 2013-14 8th,
2014-15 5th, 2015-16 8th,
2016-17 2nd, 2017-18 5th,
2018-19 6th, 2019-20 5th
- M60 Programmes
NWCFL Division One North
Programme of the Year 2019-20

St Helens Town AFC - Player Records 1946-2021

Goals in a Career	Goals in a Season	Career Appearances (250+ games)
216 Steve Pennington	47 Phil Stainton 1963/64	448 Alan Wellens (inc. 207 estimated)
118 Terry Garner	46 Steve Pennington 1997/98	359 John Critchley (16 estimated)
108 Gary Laird	45 Jackie Kendrick 1973/74	352 Steve Pennington
105 Lee Cooper	45 Steve Pennington 1993/94	346 Gary Lowe (1 estimated)
101 Glenn Walker	40 Bob Potter 1952/53	345 Glenn Walker
94 Iain Dyson	38 Terry Fearn 2000/01	327 Jackie Atherton (122 estimated)
84 Andy Gillespie	36 Albert Leadbetter 1950/51	300 Jackie Cooke (1 estimated)
83 Harry McCann	35 Arthur Tyrer 1957/58	287 Gary Laird
81 Ray Fairweather	34 Lee Cooper 2001/02	280 Kevin Grice (147 estimated)
72 Arthur Tyrer	34 Andy Gillespie 2015/16	278 Jimmy Woodyer (67 estimated)
68 Phil Stainton	33 Ronnie Rigby 1952/53	276 Iain Dyson
63 Mervyn Bull	32 Harry McCann 1950/51	272 Ray Fairweather (3 estimated)
	31 Terry Garner 1950/51	265 Larry Redmond (134 estimated)

