



F A CUP FEATURE



Best Progress by a Non-League Club in the FA Challenge Cup Since the Formation of the Football League

The features section of this website will regularly look at old publications and review them to see how what was written then has progressed (or perhaps regressed?).

The FA published a Yearbook with effect from 1948. The purpose of the publication was to give the public 'some idea of its activities and how football was organised.' The book reviewed the previous season, provided the fixture list for the season and also included other items of interest.

This feature comes from the FA Yearbook - Season 1951/52 - which reviewed the season just passed.

The title of this piece in the Yearbook is as follows:

Why the age of the 'Giant-Killer' in Cup-Tie football has passed

"For the first time since the Football League was established in 1888-89, there was no club outside the League in the last sixty-four (*of the FA Cup*). This diagram indicates how far, year by year since the League was founded, clubs which were NOT in the League progressed in the FA Challenge Cup Competition.

"The effect of the expansion of the League (*which increased from 88 to 92 clubs in 1950*) is very noticeable. The creation of the Second Division in 1892; the absorption of chief Southern League clubs to form Division 3 (South); and the formation of the Northern Section in 1920 and 1921 respectively limited the chance of the 'outsider' to capture the Cup very substantially. The recent extension of the 3rd Division to 24 clubs each is but another example of this development."

A table was beneath the above narrative showing those non-league clubs who'd made the best progress (up to the end of the 1951/52 season) which indeed showed that season to be the first where no such team got past Round 2 of the competition.

This table has been updated in a similar format to include the 2023/24 season and it reveals that there was one other season where Round 2 was the furthest a team from outside the League had progressed (that being in 2017/18). Clubs from Hampshire also feature in the table, although it's a shame there aren't a few more!

So, had the age of the 'Giant Killer' passed? Well, to take some examples - Hereford United (1972), Sutton United (1989), Lincoln City (2017) and Maidstone United (2024) proved that wasn't true.

So the message is clear:

Long Live the Age of the 'Giant Killer'!!

[Part 1 - 1888 to World War 1 here](#)

[Part 2 - 1919 to 1951 here](#)

[Part 3 - 1951 to 1978 here](#)

[Part 4 - 1978 to 2005 here](#)

[Part 5 - 2005 to 2024 here](#)

Alternatively scroll down to see each part season by season. [Revised February 2024]

FA CUP - BEST PROGRESS BY A NON FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUB - PART 1 - 1888 TO WORLD WAR 1

Season	Last 128	Last 64	Last 32	Last 16	Last 8	Semi-Final	Finalists	Winners	
1888/89						Chatham. Birmingham St George's. The Wednesday			Football Lg. formed
1889/90								The Wednesday	
1890/91						Nottingham Forest. Stoke. The Wednesday			
1891/92								Nottingham Forest	
1892/93						Middlesbrough Ironopolis			Division 2 formed
1893/94						Burton Wanderers. Leicester Fosse			
1894/95						Middlesbrough			
1895/96						Blackpool			
1896/97						Southampton St Mary's			
1897/98								Southampton	
1898/99						Southampton. Tottenham Hotspur			
1899/00								Southampton	
1900/01									Tottenham Hotspur
1901/02								Southampton	
1902/03								Millwall Athletic	
1903/04						Tottenham Hotspur			
1904/05						Southampton. Fulham			
1905/06						Southampton			
1906/07						Crystal Palace			
1907/08								Southampton	
1908/09						Millwall. Tottenham Hotspur. Norwich City. West Ham United. Plymouth Argyle			
1909/10								Swindon Town	
1910/11						West Ham United. Swindon Town			
1911/12								Swindon Town	
1912/13						Bristol Rovers. Crystal Palace. Reading. Swindon Town			
1913/14						Queen's Park Rangers			
1914/15						Norwich City. Queen's Park Rangers. Southampton			
1915 to 1919	WAR PERIOD 1								
Present day stage	→ Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Semi-Final	Final	Winners	

FA CUP - BEST PROGRESS BY A NON FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUB - PART 2 - 1919 TO 1951

Season	Last 128	Last 64	Last 32	Last 16	Last 8	Last 4	Last 2	Winners
1919/20					Cardiff City. Plymouth Argyle			
1920/21				Lincoln City				Division 3(South) formed
1921/22			Worksop Town					Division 3 (North) formed
1922/23			Bath City. Blyth Spartans. Corinthians. New Brighton. Worksop Town					
1923/24			Corinthians					
1924/25			Corinthians					
1925/26			Boston. Chilton Colliery Recreation. Corinthians.			The present 'proper' round system adopted		
1926/27			Corinthians					
1927/28			Corinthians. London Caledonians. Peterborough & Fletton United					
1928/29			Corinthians					
1929/30			Corinthians					
1930/31			Corinthians. Scarborough					
1931/32			Bath City. Burton Town. Corinthians. Crook Town. Darwen					
1932/33			Corinthians. Folkestone					
1933/34			Workington					
1934/35			Bath City. Wigan Athletic. Yeovil and Petters United					
1935/36			Dartford. Margate. Southall. Workington					
1936/37			Dartford. Spennymoor United					
1937/38			Scarborough. Yeovil and Petters United					
1938/39			Chelmsford City					
WAR PERIOD 2								
1945/46			Lovells Athletic					
1946/47			Gillingham					
1947/48					Colchester United			
1948/49					Yeovil Town			
1949/50			Nuneaton Borough. Weymouth. Yeovil Town					
1950/51			Ashington. Chelmsford City. Dartford. Hereford United. Nelson. Rhyl					Division 3 Enlarged
WEF 1925/26	→ Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Semi-Final	Final	Winners

FA CUP - BEST PROGRESS BY A NON FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUB - PART 3 - 1951 TO 1978

Season	Last 128	Last 64	Last 32	Last 16	Last 8	Semi-Final	Finalists	Winners
1951/52			<i>Stockton. Buxton</i>					
1952/53				<i>Walthamstow Avenue</i>				
1953/54				<i>Headington United</i>				
1954/55				<i>Bishop Auckland</i>				
1955/56			<i>Bedford Town. Boston United. Burton Albion. Worksop Town</i>					
1956/57				<i>New Brighton. Peterborough United. Rhyl</i>				
1957/58			<i>Hereford United. Yeovil Town</i>					
1958/59				<i>Worcester City</i>				
1959/60				<i>Peterborough United</i>				
1960/61			<i>Oxford United</i>					
1961/62				<i>Weymouth</i>				
1962/63				<i>Gravesend & Northfleet</i>				
1963/64				<i>Bedford Town</i>				
1964/65			<i>Barnet</i>					
1965/66				<i>Bedford Town</i>				
1966/67			<i>Bedford Town. Nuneaton Borough</i>					
1967/68				<i>Macclesfield Town</i>				
1968/69				<i>Kettering Town</i>				
1969/70				<i>Sutton United</i>				
1970/71			<i>Barnet. Rhyl. Wigan Athletic. Yeovil Town</i>					
1971/72				<i>Hereford United</i>				
1972/73			<i>Barnet. Chelmsford City. Margate</i>					
1973/74			<i>Alvechurch. Boston United. Grantham. Hendon</i>					
1974/75			<i>Leatherhead. Stafford Rangers. Wimbledon</i>					
1975/76				<i>Tooting & Mitcham United</i>				
1976/77				<i>Northwich Victoria</i>				
1977/78					<i>Blyth Spartans</i>			
	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Semi-Final	Final	Winners

FA CUP - BEST PROGRESS BY A NON FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUB - PART 4 - 1978 TO 2005

Season	Last 128	Last 64	Last 32	Last 16	Last 8	Semi-Final	Finalists	Winners
1978/79				Altrincham. Maidstone United				
1979/80				Harlow Town				
1980/81				Enfield				
1981/82			Altrincham. Barnet. Enfield					
1982/83			Bishop's Stortford. Weymouth. Worcester City					
1983/84				Telford United				
1984/85				Telford United				
1985/86				Altrincham				
1986/87			Caernarfon Town. Maidstone United. Telford United			Automatic promotion and relegation to/from the League begins		
1987/88			Bath City. Macclesfield Town. Maidstone United. Sutton United. Yeovil Town					
1988/89			Kettering Town. Sutton United					
1989/90			Darlington. Whitley Bay					
1990/91				Woking				
1991/92			Crawley Town. Farnborough Town. Kettering Town. Woking					
1992/93			Marine. Marlow. Yeovil Town				The Premier League begins	
1993/94				Kidderminster Harriers				
1994/95			Altrincham. Aylesbury United. Enfield. Marlow					
1995/96			Gravesend & Northfleet. Woking					
1996/97				Hednesford Town				
1997/98				Stevenage Borough				
1998/99			Rushden & Diamonds. Yeovil Town					
1999/00			Hereford United. Rushden & Diamonds					
2000/01				Kingstonian				
2001/02			Canvey Island. Dagenham & Redbridge					
2002/03			Dagenham & Redbridge. Farnborough Town			Promotion/relegation applies to two League clubs		
2003/04				Scarborough. Telford United				
2004/05			Exeter City. Yeading					
	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Semi-Final	Final	Winners

FA CUP - BEST PROGRESS BY A NON FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUB - PART 5 - 2005 TO 2024

Season	Last 128	Last 64	Last 32	Last 16	Last 8	Semi-Final	Finalists	Winners
2005/06			<i>Burton Albion. Northwich Victoria. Nuneaton Borough. Tamworth</i>					
2006/07			<i>Aldershot Town. Tamworth</i>					
2007/08			<i>Havant & Waterlooville</i>					
2008/09			<i>Kettering Town. Torquay United</i>					
2009/10			<i>Barrow. Forest Green Rovers. Luton Town. York City</i>					
2010/11			<i>Crawley Town</i>					
2011/12			<i>Fleetwood Town. Salisbury City. Tamworth. Wrexham</i>					
2012/13			<i>Luton Town</i>					
2013/14			<i>Kidderminster Harriers</i>					
2014/15			<i>Blyth Spartans. Dover Athletic. Gateshead. Southport. Wrexham</i>					
2015/16			<i>Eastleigh</i>					
2016/17			<i>Lincoln City</i>				Round 6 now officially known as Quarter-Final	
2017/18		<i>AFC Fylde. Boreham Wood. Gateshead. Guiseley. Hereford. Leatherhead. Maidstone United. Oxford City. Slough Town. Woking</i>						
2018/19			<i>Barnet</i>					
2019/20			<i>AFC Fylde.. Hartlepool United</i>					
2020/21			<i>Chorley</i>					
2021/22			<i>Boreham Wood</i>					
2022/23			<i>Wrexham</i>					
2023/24			<i>Maidstone United</i>					
	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6/QF	Semi-Final	Final	Winners