

WHY AFC?

There's a growing number of football clubs around the country that, as soon as they go into administration or receivership, they pop up again the following day under the same name but with an 'AFC' prefix. If the trend continues then sooner or later (but not in my lifetime) every team in the country will be called 'AFC This' or 'AFC That' (replace This or That with your own team's name).

So, how many clubs have done this? Well, there's plenty of clubs with the same prefix, like AFC Hornchurch, AFC Sudbury and AFC Wimbledon in the Ryman League alone. Then there's AFC Wallingford who play in the Hellenic League, AFC Peasmarsh & Iden from the East Sussex League Premier Division, AFC Telford United of the Blue Square North, AFC Hayes of the British Gas Business Southern League South & West, AFC Totton of the Sydenhams Wessex League Premier Division, and AFC Wulfrunians playing in the West Midlands Premier Division.

But, is it only down to clubs folding and re-emerging again that's the root of the 'new style' prefix and, why have they all chosen to stick 'AFC' in front of their names?

Let's start with AFC Telford United. They started life as Wellington United back in the late 19th century and changed their name to Telford United in 1969 when the New Town was established. The supporters trust stepped in a couple of seasons ago after the receivers were called in. The result was that AFC Telford United appeared the following day!

AFC Hayes were, until 2006-07, Brook House FC. I am not certain, but I think that Hayes and Yeading joining forces created the way for Brook House to change their name to something less 'unusual' and that travelling supporters can find on a map. AFC Peasmarsh & Iden FC amalgamated in 2007 and, until that time, Iden FC were cosy with Rye United as Rye and Iden United. The partnership fell apart after 5 years and Iden FC were then quick to jump in with AFC Peasmarsh.

I'm not sure what's going on up in Kempston, however, as that place has two clubs with the AFC prefix—Town and Rovers. Even more interesting is that they share the same website. Quite peculiar for rival teams in the same locality to be bedmates in such a way. AFC Kempston Town play in the Bedford & District Premier League, whilst their near neighbours AFC Kempston Rovers play in the Premier Division of the United Counties League. Looking at their joint website, however, you could be forgiven for thinking that they are one and the same club.

Coming back nearer to home, as in 'keep it in the Ryman', AFC Wimbledon was formed around the time that the football authorities allowed the directors of the original Wimbledon FC to 'up sticks' from their South London roots and head north some 70-odd miles to become Milton Keynes Dons. The supporters rightly got annoyed at this and as a result AFC Wimbledon was born. AFC Hornchurch, meanwhile, became the phoenix to rise from the ashes after Hornchurch FC went belly up in 2005. 'Overstretching the budget' appeared to be the primary cause, which led to the club effectively folding, before resurfacing under the AFC badge.

AFC Sudbury, on the other hand, obtained their prefix through the amalgamation of the town's two clubs Sudbury Town and Sudbury Wanderers. That was in 1999, before which both clubs enjoyed varying amounts of success in their own right.

I know that I've not covered every AFC-titled club in the land, and the list I have provided above is not exhaustive, but I believe that I have shown that it is not always the modern-day Shylocks wanting their pound of flesh that causes clubs to add AFC to their name. But perhaps we can all ponder this thought... every one of those clubs have one thing in common. That is to succeed. So perhaps there's more to AFC than meets the eye.

Could it really, instead, be that AFC is an acronym for **A Fighting Chance**?

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