

“We’re going home!” Clapton CFC have become owners of the historic Old Spotted Dog ground in Forest Gate.

It's official. Clapton Football Club Limited, the community benefit society behind Clapton Community Football Club, today became the proud new owners of the Old Spotted Dog.

The oldest senior football ground in London has been the spiritual home of Clapton supporters for over 130 years... but for the first time ever they now own it.

The previous owners, Star Pubs & Bars, had been looking for new tenants since last summer, when it terminated the lease held by Newham Community Leisure Ltd due to non-payment of rent.

Supporters-owned Clapton CFC - which has sold a phenomenal 15,000 replica shirts - were originally offered the lease in September 2019.

A few months later, the plans changed and the club were given the chance to purchase the freehold outright instead.

In a vote by the members at the club's General Meeting, it was unanimously agreed to make an offer, which was accepted, and the process of changing the ownership has now finally been completed.

The famous old ground, which has played host to Dutch giants Ajax and 1966 World Cup winners, needs a lot of work to bring it back up to the required standard after a sustained period of neglect by the previous leaseholder.

It means both the men's and women's first teams will still need to play at their temporary home of Wadham Lodge Sports Ground in Walthamstow for the upcoming 2020/21 season.

However, the new Old Spotted Dog Ground board of directors, made up of Clapton CFC supporters and residents from the local area, are optimistic of raising the funds needed to restore the ground, and can bank on a sizeable number of the Tons many fans and 1,350 members to volunteer.

Kevin Blowe from *The Old Spotted Dog Trust* said:

“For the first time ever, the oldest senior football ground in London is owned by a football club, and a member-run, non-profit, community-focused football club at that.

“Bringing Clapton’s spiritual home back into community use, after a season of boycotts of Clapton FC home games when it was placed into liquidation by the previous tenant, was absolutely central to the motivation for setting up Clapton CFC back in the summer of 2018.

“Finally having a ground of our own, owned by members, will offer long term stability for the club and also the chance to build lasting links with the local community.”

The long fight to make the Old Spotted Dog a community asset once more has been backed by West Ham MP, Lyn Brown, Mayor of Newham, Rokhsana Fiaz and many local councillors.

Lyn Brown MP said:

“At a time when so many community clubs are under threat, it is wonderful to know that Clapton CFC are instead taking huge steps forward to secure their future locally. Clapton have a special history at the Old Spotted Dog ground, and a powerful connection to our communities in East London through their support of charities and causes.”

*Mayor of Newham, **Rokhsana Fiaz** said; ‘I’m thrilled that finally Clapton CFC are back home in Forest Gate where they rightly belong. I’m looking forward to working with the Club and its dedicated members in bringing the beautiful game to new and diverse audiences in Newham. Reflecting Clapton CFC’s continued commitment to solidarity, cooperation and equality through football, I am so thankful and proud of the Tons.’*

Clapton CFC would like to hear from community organisations who would like to use the facility - email osd@claptoncfc.co.uk

Notes:

About Clapton Community Football Club

[Clapton CFC](#) was established in June 2018 by the life members and supporters of Clapton FC as a fan-owned, fan-operated community club.

The club’s away shirt, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War, became a best-seller with over 15,000 shirts sold.

It was inspired by the flag of the Spanish Republic and honoured the International Brigades, who travelled to Spain attempting to hold back the fascist tide of General Franco.

As a co-operative, each member of Clapton CFC has an equal vote in the direction the club takes. Membership costs from £5 per season from <https://membermojo.co.uk/ccfc/>

Its men's team play in the Middlesex County Football League Premier Division (tier 11) and the women's team in the Greater London Women's Football League Division One (tier 7).

Attendances for both teams have been unprecedented for their levels, with a record attendance of 1,266 in May 2019.

In addition, the club has a women's team in the midweek Super 5s League and a cricket team.

It also offers two pay-what-you-want weekly open training sessions, the ‘Young Tons’ for under 18s and another for women and non-binary people.

About Clapton Football Club

Clapton FC, originally known as Downs FC, date back to the 1870s and moved to the Old Spotted Dog in 1887.

The club were the first English football team to play on the continent, in 1890, and won the FA Amateur Cup five times.

Since its origins over 140 years ago, Clapton FC has always been a constituted members club.

However, the team playing under that name in the Essex Senior League, most recently based in Southend-on-Sea, has been closed to members for at least 8 years.

About the Old Spotted Dog

The Old Spotted Dog Ground is on Upton Lane, Forest Gate, next to the boarded-up grade II-listed pub of the same name that is now being turned into a hotel.

It has hosted games against many of the top clubs in its history, including nearby Premier League giants Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United.

The ground has been owned by various pub companies over the years, with a covenant that means it must be used for sport.

A High Court case over the disputed liquidation of the warehouse area of the ground, which houses the dressing room, is still awaiting a court date.



Photo: Clapton Community FC members and players from the Men's and Women's 1st teams.
Photo credit Garry Strutt

Website: <https://www.oldspotted.dog/>

Grounds photographs June 2020

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/claptoncfc/albums/72157715213199477>

For press enquiries email comms@claptoncfc.co.uk

