



MACCLESFIELD TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB RETURN TO THE NON-LEAGUE SCENE

CHAPTER THREE Season 2014-2015 An Improving Picture on and off the Pitch



**BY
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OVERVIEW

There can have been few years when there has been such a contrasting picture at the beginning and the end. In May 2014 the future of the club was uncertain with a large debt still outstanding and some football debts unpaid. A further takeover bid was in the pipeline but this, like others, did not come to fruition and with the requirement for Conference membership that football debts have to be satisfied, following lengthy discussions by club representatives with the Conference Board, the owner, Amar Alkadhi made a further injection into the club to satisfy the Board, ensuring that the club continued to function at Conference level.

Backed by the Operations Committee, manager John Askey built a team which exceeded all initial expectations reaching a play-off position in the middle of November 2014, remaining there until mid-April 2015 and challenging for the top place at times. During the season the team were often referred to by the media as 'the surprise package', demonstrating their achievements on a low budget. Unfortunately, the momentum could not be maintained towards the end of the season, but the team finished in a very creditable sixth position, losing only two matches at home, as well as winning the Cheshire Senior Cup for the 21st time.

Off the field, the club's position was improving all the time, helped by the additional income partly provided through increased matchday attendance, with the overall debt reduced to a manageable level. By April 2015 a much more positive feeling was in evidence around the club.

As always, the main purpose of this chapter is to record the achievements of the football team, but a summary of some off-field events is also included to provide as fuller a picture as possible.

OFF-FIELD

People (and Roary)

Director David Wolliscroft resigned from his position as a director of the club for personal reasons leaving the owner as the sole director. In addition, Mr Wolliscroft resigned from the Operations Committee which otherwise retained the same membership with Mark Blower as chairman.

Former director Geoff Findlow was made an Honorary Life President of the club in recognition of his past work including the Silk Alliance and the Information Technology Centre which won the award 'UK Online Centre for the North West' in 2003.

The evergreen Honorary Life President Roy Higginbotham yet again re-decorated the McIlroy Lounge and Keith's Bar at his own expense in the close season to ensure that these facilities presented a good image for the club.

A special mention goes to Paul and Helen Bona who splendidly provided all the catering requirements for both match days and other events. The quality of the food was always of a very high standard and however busy they were, there was always a smile on their face.

Prior to the home match against Eastleigh at the end of August, the club mascot Roary took part in the nationwide ice bucket challenge for the Motor Neurone Disease Charity.

In June 2014 groundsman Liam Cash left the club. Prior to the appointment of a replacement, staff from the Tytherington Club were responsible for the maintenance of the ground. In September Danny Walker was appointed as the Silkmen's new groundsman. Although Danny had been away

from groundsman's duties for a couple of years he had worked on a golf course and was at Edgeley Park, Stockport when both County and Sale Sharks were ground sharing.

Throughout the playing season Ray Bamford and his family (home), and Richard Pattrick and his family (away) provided excellent commentaries for matches on the Silkmen Player facility enabling supporters who were unable to attend matches to share in the match day experience.

Season Tickets

The cost of season tickets remained at the same level, sales reaching 618 in comparison to 724 for the 2013-14 season, an understandable reduction due to the uncertain position of the club during the Early Bird scheme which finished at the end of May. In addition, the card company who processes all credit and debit card transactions for the club withdrew the facility as they could no longer underwrite the purchase of season tickets.

In a bid to increase season ticket sales a special 24-hour sale with a 10% discount was held over two days for adults and seniors from noon on Friday 8 August to noon on Saturday 9 August.

Mini season tickets, with prices ranging from £140 to £15, went on sale covering all home league matches from 4 January to the end of the season.

A Platinum Patron Scheme was available for the first time at individual and corporate level.

For a cost of £1000 the individual scheme offered:

- The vice president package
 - A hospitality table for eight for two matches
 - One away trip on the team coach
 - Moss Rose Boardroom hospitality for one game
- 16 supporters joined the scheme.

For the cost of £2000 the corporate scheme offered

- All the facilities of the individual scheme times two
- Matchball Sponsorship and associated website and programme advertising for two games.

There were eight corporate members.

Two additional Membership Schemes were also introduced

Adult Blues Membership at a cost of £40 providing

- Personalised Membership Card
- One year's membership to Silkmen Player
- One free adult ticket voucher to a home match for the 2014-15 season
- £10 Club Shop voucher
- £5 food/drink Matchday voucher
- 10% discount on home and away shirts
- Priority ticket sales for cup games following sales to season ticket holders

24 supporters enrolled

Junior Blues Membership at a cost of £10 providing

- Personalised Membership Card
- One free under 18 ticket voucher to a home match for the 2014-15 season
- £5 Club Shop voucher
- £2 food/drink Matchday voucher
- 5% discount for home and away shirts
- Priority ticket sales for cup games following sales to season ticket holders

Five juniors enrolled.

Conference Membership

The representatives of the club approached the Annual General Meeting of the Conference knowing that they faced an uphill task to persuade the Board of the Conference that MTFC should remain members of the Conference as it is a condition of membership that all Football Debts must be paid to retain membership. The HMRC debt had already been settled, funds had been set aside to pay outstanding wages on completion of a potential takeover by Andy Scott, a tight but workable budget had been prepared and tested by the Conference and all that remained was the final signature to the takeover. However, a further vital step was required by the Conference to include Cheshire East Council as the owners of the ground freehold because of the complexity of the situation.

It was reported that pre-AGM meetings went well but after the AGM, following further detailed questioning by the Board of the Conference, they reconsidered Macclesfield's financial position and with two other clubs, Hereford United and Salisbury City, both under detailed scrutiny and subsequently losing their Conference status, the Board's further questioning uncovered some issues which the members found unacceptable and issued an ultimatum 'to get it sorted or be expelled from the Conference'.

The club's owner, Amar Alkadhi, was advised of the position and having the best interests of the club at heart provided a further injection of cash to satisfy the Conference Board ensuring that Macclesfield Town FC retained their membership of the Conference for the 2014-15 season.

Shortly after, detailed statements were made by Mr Alkadhi covering Conference membership and several other issues which, in turn led to a statement by former chairman Mike Rance and an explanatory statement by the Silkmen Supporters' Trust, all of which were initially posted on the Silkmen Supporters' Trust web site.

Ground Maintenance

Campey Turf Care assisted the club with close season maintenance of the playing surface using the Moss Rose ground to showcase their equipment to people in the industry.

Richard Marlow, director of Solarcrest and Daniel Dakon of BLD Construction supported maintenance of various buildings on the ground, in particular the Corner Flag Bar and the external toilet block. A sum of £5,000 was spent on preliminary work to ensure that these facilities were ready for use for the first home match of the season. The funding was covered by Solarcrest and associates Maccplus and MKM Building Supplies. However, in August 2014 it was calculated that a further sum of £10,000 was required to complete the work and a bank account was set up at the NatWest to receive donations from Macc fans which unfortunately failed to attract any donations. During the season further maintenance of the Corner Flag Bar was undertaken by volunteers, but only bottled beer could be sold as the cellar required refurbishment. This group of volunteers met regularly to undertake maintenance work around the ground with the club also relying on hard working volunteers for many aspects of the club's work.

Sponsorship

Vanarama, commercial vehicle specialists, became the official sponsors of the Conference National with the leagues named Vanarama Conference, Vanarama Conference North and Vanarama Conference South. As part of the deal any supporter hiring a van earned their club £100 and monthly awards were introduced for Manager of the Month, Player of the Month, 'Pic' of the Month and Club Ambassador. The 'Vanarama Big Day Out' was launched for the Vanarama Conference Promotion Final at Wembley on Sunday 17 May 2015, with vouchers on sale at a 50% discount of £10 adults and £5 children during an Early Bird period from 1 to 28 February after which the vouchers would cost £20 and £10. Each Conference club received 850 vouchers and all Conference

North and South clubs received 350 vouchers. Each voucher could be exchanged for a Matchday ticket at the club where the voucher had been purchased.

At club level JD Sports agreed to sponsor the home and away shirts for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons with the JD King of Trainers logo. The traditional blue shirt was retained for the home shirt but a new dark green colour featured for the away shirt.

Major club sponsors included a partnership with local car dealer Audi who provided a sponsored car for manager John Askey. Another local car dealership, Bristol Street Motors, signed a partnership with the club sponsoring the Main Stand on the London Road side of the ground formerly sponsored by Silk 106.9.

Media

Tom Rance left the club during the season. Tom had built up a significant amount of experience dealing with the club's media over many years, initially assisting his father to edit the programme, then alongside Bernard Jordan and Richard Stanton, before becoming responsible for the whole of the club's media.

James Beckett, who had previously worked for Crewe Alexandra FC, was appointed together with a group of students on a journalist course at Staffordshire University, to oversee the media requirements of the club. James was tasked with increasing income on the official web site which is calculated by the number of pages accessed. James has well and truly achieved this goal by including numerous player/manager interviews which have, on occasions, been split into two or three sections. Whilst much more information has been provided, the greater volume produced an unfortunate reduction in the level of accuracy. The Silkmen Player now includes videos of historic matches and the club became a member of Instagram in November.

For the Manchester United TV series 'When the Floodlights Fade' the production team spent time filming at the Moss Rose in preparation for a programme about former Macclesfield player Richard Irving. Richard told his own story relating his time in the youth section of United, followed by his time at other clubs, how he fell out of love with football becoming a commercial pilot and more recently taking a franchise with Belvoir Lettings. The programme included an interview with former manager Sammy McIlroy MBE.

Further research was undertaken for the official archive website www.silkmenarchives.org.uk but with some historic newspapers having been lost for ever it would appear that all available match information has now been retrieved. Supporter Steve Wilson continued his excellent research to enhance profiles for those players who appeared in the Northern Premier League and the Vauxhall Conference. The January edition of Football Programme Monthly magazine included a very positive review and mention of the website was included on the 'Make it Macclesfield' website. The site will continue to be updated regularly for each season together with any further information which can be added to the existing player profiles.

Super Silk Lotto

For many years the club supported the Gold Bond Lottery which was operated from Blackpool and included other clubs. A working party, sponsored by the Silkmen Supporters' Trust, came up with a replacement lottery, the Super Silk Lotto (Your Town, Your Club, Your Lotto), providing an opportunity to promote the key concepts of the mission statement of the SST, helping to improve and develop Macclesfield Town FC via its partnership with fans and the local community. For an entry of £1 per week, the lottery provides a prize of £100 in a weekly draw made on Canalside Community Radio each Friday morning. The charity partner for the 2014-15 season was the David

Lewis organisation which received a percentage of the proceeds at the end of the season. An initial donation of £500 was presented to the club with further monthly donations of £300.

Non-football Events

In support of the original objective at the time the McIlroy Lounge was first opened to ensure that non-football income streams were attained, several social events were held.

- In October an evening 'Up Close and personal' was held to thank fans for their continued support.
- A very successful evening was held in November 'McIlroy in the McIlroy' with Sammy McIlroy MBE, Phil Power, MC Allan Sharratt and Comedian John Stiles. The cost was £500 for a table of 10 with prestige tables at a premium, although individuals could book at a cost of £50 per head. In addition, there was an auction and a raffle raising funds for the club.
- The usual Christmas Party Nights were available.
- Two Race Nights were held with all bets at £1
- In February there was a performance by the Screaming Beavers, cost £20 including food.
- A Fashion Show in March, cost £3.50, where the majority of those attending were not connected with the club. It was the first occasion that many had been in the McIlroy Suite providing marketing spin off opportunities in the use of the club's facilities.



Roy Higginbotham (right) welcoming Geoff Findlow as a new Honorary Life President



Roary taking the Ice Bucket Challenge



Close Season Pitch Renovation



Bristol Street Motors Sponsorship



John Askey, Sammy McIlroy MBE and Gil Prescott, 'McIlroy in the McIlroy'

ON FIELD

John Askey was again appointed manager. Initially it had been decided that there was insufficient room in the very tight budget to cover the cost of an assistant manager, however after John stating that he could not undertake all the managerial work by himself as well as Efe Sodje's ability to bring commercial sponsorship into the club, the situation was reconsidered by the Operations Committee with the ever popular Sodje re-appointed.

At the end of the 2013-14 season all players were out of contract and it was only after the membership of the Conference issue had been resolved that John was able to commence signing players. A mixture of contract, non-contract and loan players were used throughout the season with a total of 38 players used in all competitions, a full list is included at the end of this chapter.

Friendly Matches

Six matches were played, the Silkmen winning two, drawing one and losing three. The first match took place on a Friday evening at **Buxton** where Macclesfield fielded a mixture of youngsters and trialists who took a 3-0 lead only for Buxton to match the score with three strikes before half time. With the match looking as though a penalty shootout would be required to decide who gained the Keith Alexander Memorial Trophy, Buxton scored a fourth goal to make the score 4-3 and lift the trophy for the first time.

In the first home match, another Friday evening fixture, the Silkmen entertained a youthful **Bolton Wanderers** side in front of a crowd of 615 including 279 Bolton supporters. Midway through the first half Chris Holroyd collected the ball, after it had rebounded off Wanderers defender Clan Bolger, before firing home to give Macclesfield the lead. Bolton substitute Zach Clough equalised in the 81st minute, this entertaining game finishing on level terms.

The following Tuesday **Crewe Alexandra** were the visitors to the Moss Rose with the Silkmen running out 1-0 winners through a seventh minute Waide Fairhurst goal. Macclesfield could consider themselves fortunate that this was a friendly fixture when, early in the game, Richard Branagan handled the ball outside his area. 545 supporters turned out for this match.

On an extremely hot and sunny afternoon the Silkmen travelled to **Leek Town**. Understandably this match was played at a slower pace with a drinks interval part way through each half. Macclesfield were fortunate to win this match as Leek missed many scoring opportunities and the Silkmen did not help themselves initially using the long ball tactic. At the first drinks interval, stand-in manager Efe Sodje got them playing the ball on the ground, the team being much more effective. John Paul Kissock, who was still with the club at this time, scored the first goal in the 62nd minute having gone past two defenders and slotted home under the 'keeper. Josh Amiss scored the second goal on 90 minutes following a one-on-one with the 'keeper.

Rochdale were the visitors for the next match which was attended by 488 supporters. This was a disappointing performance by Macclesfield although they were facing a side which had just been promoted to League One in the Football League. Both the visitor's goals came from brilliant chips over goalkeeper Rhys Taylor.

For the final pre-season match Macclesfield were invited to **Stockport County** for the Richard Landon Testimonial match. Richard has been the kit man for Stockport County for many years and is a former Silkman. 138 Silkmen fans travelled to Edgeley Park where the attendance was 934. Trialist Malachi Lavelle-Moore opened the scoring with a looping header to give the Silkmen a 1-0 lead in

the 20th minute but 11 minutes later former Silkman Kristian Dennis equalised for County. After the interval, new signing for the Hatters Richard Baker gave them the lead which he extended to give the home side a 3-1 lead. Macclesfield pulled a goal back in the 76th minute when another trialist Mwasile tried to lob the 'keeper but his shot was tipped onto the crossbar, however Mwasile was quickest to react to the rebound and poked the ball home. County protested that the ball had not crossed the line but after the referee had consulted his assistant the goal was given.



Stockport County - Malachi Lavell-Moore (centre)



Stockport County - Captain Paul Turnbull

SEASON REVIEW

Cup Competitions

Drawn at home to fellow Vanarama Conference rivals Wrexham in the 4th Qualifying Round of the **FA Cup**, this match was moved forward to the evening of Friday 24 October from the Saturday so that Wrexham and Chester supporters would not be travelling together as Chester had been drawn to play at Stockport County in the Cup.

An entertaining first half saw both sides attacking with pace. Macclesfield took the lead in the 28th minute following Paul Turnbull's ball down the right wing which released Chris Holroyd who passed in-field to sole striker Waide Fairhurst. He took the ball forward creating space to release his shot, a low drive which took a deflection off defender Manny Smith. The second half was rather disappointing with the Silkmen playing the long ball, a tactic which did not work well as they were playing deep and coupled with poor passing they were looking second best. Unmarked in the centre of the pitch, former Silkman Connor Jennings inevitably levelled the score for the visitors in the 66th minute when he struck a low hard shot from 25 yards through a crowd of players which beat the diving Rhys Taylor.

The replay at the Racecourse Ground took place the following Tuesday in front of a crowd of 2260 including 194 Macclesfield supporters. Manager John Askey played a 4-4-2 formation with Chris Holroyd joining Waide Fairhurst as the strike force. Macclesfield lost midfielder Paul Lewis in the first minute with a broken collar bone but five minutes later, on-loan defender Alex Grant put the Silkmen into the lead when he converted a Waide Fairhurst corner with a powerful header. Wrexham then started to force the game, Andy Bishop giving them the lead in the 33rd minute. The same player doubled their lead in the 46th minute. A penalty was then awarded to Wrexham when Alex Grant was dismissed for the foul, however, Rhys Taylor made a fantastic save to keep the score at 2-1 in favour of Wrexham at the interval.

Wrexham extended their lead two minutes into the second half through Johnny Hunt but Paul Turnbull pulled a goal back for the Silkmen eight minutes later with a 25-yard curling shot to make the score 3-2. 10-men Macclesfield battled on but Wrexham booked their place in the first round with two further goals from Wes York (61st minute) and Nick Rushton (92nd minute).

In the first round of the **FA Trophy** Macclesfield were drawn away at arch rivals Altrincham. There were five changes made to the victorious team at Aldershot the previous Wednesday, John Askey stating that he needed to rest players. In came Branagan, Gnahoua, Bailey, Grant and Fairhurst replacing Taylor, Turnbull, Moke, Whitaker and Barnes-Homer. The Macclesfield back line had performed superbly throughout the season and it was uncharacteristic for them to be caught flat-footed early in the match allowing Altrincham to take the lead in the second minute when Damian Reeves scored what turned out to be the winning goal. Without a single shot on target in the whole match, Macclesfield played well below their recent form missing scoring opportunities. Experienced midfielder Danny Whitaker replaced Waide Fairhurst 12 minutes into the second half but just as the Silkmen were beginning to assert their authority on the match Whitaker was dismissed by referee Bennett when he was adjudged to have been the last man when he caught Reeves (On appeal this red card was rescinded). Despite being down to 10 men Macclesfield strived to find the equaliser but without success.

There was much better news in the **Cheshire Senior Cup** competition when the Silkmen won the cup for the first time since 2000, although there was no competition for Cheshire based Football League clubs in the 2007-08 season and the Cheshire FA held a separate competition for Football League

Clubs for the three seasons from 2008-09 by way of the Cheshire Premier Challenge Cup which Crewe Alexandra won on all three occasions.

In the **first round** the Silkmen were given an away tie at Vanarama Conference North side Hyde United. A weakened team was fielded with on-loan Tomi Adelaye, Liam Gibson, Jack Hunter and former Youth team manager and sole substitute Byron Jenkins all made their senior debut for the club. The hosts took the lead in the 18th minute but Tomi Adelaye equalised for the Silkmen on the stroke of half time. The second half saw Malachi Lavelle-Moore score his only goal of the season but a penalty seven minutes from time brought Hyde level to take the match into extra time. Adelaye secured victory for the Silkmen in the 103rd minute. This was John Askey's 50th win as manager/caretaker manager.

Macclesfield entertained Crewe Alexandra in the **second round** in front of a crowd of 199 of whom 60 had travelled from Crewe. The Silkmen started brightly Waide Fairhurst tapping the ball home in the fourth minute after which despite pressing hard Macclesfield could not find a second goal. The Railwaymen gradually found their way into the game, Bradley Inman equalising in the 32nd minute. The start of the second half was an even contest, Crewe coming close to scoring but Danny Rowe secured victory for the Silkmen in the 73rd minute. James Thorne made his debut for the Silkmen and Chris Holroyd made his 100th appearance in all competitions for Macclesfield.

The **semi-final** against Stockport County at the Moss Rose saw a crowd of 489 witness a match which produced few chances for both teams. The deadlock was broken in the 32nd minute, Jack Hunter bursting into the box to meet an excellent cross by Adriano Moke to score his first goal for the Silkmen. Stockport were unlucky shortly after when they hit the crossbar with a powerful shot. Much of the second half was played in the midfield and whilst the pace remained at a high level, neither side could break through to add to the score, although Macclesfield 'keeper Richie Branagan made a tremendous diving save towards the end of the match.

The **Final** was played at the Weaver Stadium, home to Nantwich Town on 21 April against Northwich Victoria in front of a crowd of 304. The teams were:

Macclesfield Town: Branagan, Halls, Disney, Hunter (Gibson 72), Cowan, Haining, Moke, Lewis, Fairhurst, Rowe, Bailey-Jones. Subs not used: Tighe, Thompson, Jenkins

Northwich Victoria: Smith, Smalley, Grayson (Summerskill 60), Clarke, Henry, Ali, Cook, Roddy (Fishwick 85), Burnett, Amis, Sanogo Subs not used: Deasy, Meadowcroft, Bennett

Macclesfield had the better of the play in the first half going two goals up through Waide Fairhurst (20 minutes) and Theo Bailey-Jones (44 minutes) but in the 46th minute Josh Amis pulled a goal back for Northwich when he converted a corner. Northwich started the second half well and equalised in the 69th minute from another set piece, Aboubacar Sanogo heading home Gary Burnell's free-kick. But it was Danny Rowe who scored the winning goal for the Silkmen six minutes from time: Adriano Moke sprinted with the ball from just inside his own half, found Waide Fairhurst who sent the ball to Rowe who lobbed the ball over 'keeper Dane Smith.

This was the 21st occasion Macclesfield had won the cup ensuring that they retained their record of winning the cup more times than any other team, with Northwich Victoria in second place having secured the cup on 19 occasions.



Jack Hunter celebrating scoring against Stockport County



Danny Rowe, scorer of the winning goal in the Cheshire Senior Cup Final, in action against Northwich Victoria

Vanarama Conference

AUGUST

Braintree Town were the visitors to the Moss Rose for the first match of the campaign managed by Alan Devonshire wearing his trade mark flat cap. Braintree had a difficult journey only arriving at the ground half an hour before kick-off having been delayed on the M6 due to an accident. A first half goal by Chris Holroyd gave Macclesfield a 1-0 victory, their first opening day win since 2004. The goal on 15 minutes gave Macclesfield confidence but a double save by goalkeeper Rhys Taylor denied Braintree just before the end of the first half and they took charge of the opening exchanges at the start of the second half. The Iron fizzed the ball across the goal on more than one occasion but could not find the back of the net. Macclesfield almost gained an own goal but Nick Hamann, the Braintree 'keeper, made an excellent save low on the ground. The visitors played the final seven minutes with only 10 men having made all their substitutions when Matt Paine was injured. Scott Barrow, Adriano Moke and Luke Waterfall all made their debuts for Macclesfield.

At **AFC Telford United**, Macclesfield cruised into a first half 3-1 lead. Adriano Moke opened the scoring in the fourth minute when he slotted home a perfectly weighted cross from Waide Fairhurst. Andy Owens equalised for Telford in the 32nd minute but two minutes later Fairhurst diverted a powerful shot from Scott Barrow into the net to give the Silkmen the lead. Two minutes from the interval Fairhurst scored his second goal when he reacted quickly, 'keeper Hedges having fumbled a Paul Turnbull shot. In the second half Telford got their act together putting Macclesfield onto the back foot hitting the post, the crossbar and forcing a succession of corners. Silkmen 'keeper Rhys Taylor had to be at his best but could not keep out a shot from Askrigg to take the score to 3-2 setting up a nervous final nine minutes. Malachi Lavelle-Moore made his debut from the substitutes' bench for Macclesfield.

A visit to **Woking** saw Macclesfield creating many chances but all to no avail and for the second successive match they had to defend well with 'keeper Rhys Taylor again in fine form. The match finished 0-0 which was a good point as in all the visits to the Kingfield stadium this was only the fourth point which the Silkmen had gained.

There was another 0-0 draw when **Kidderminster Harriers** visited the Moss Rose. The match was very well described by the media as 'a workmanlike and well organised Macclesfield against a resolute and watertight Kidderminster'. Both teams cancelled out each other with the defences standing firm. David Gonzalez Diaz made his debut for Macclesfield. Former players Brian Fidler, Merrick Corfield, Keith Goalen and Nat McKinstry were guests of newly appointed Honorary Life President Geoff Findlow.

On Bank Holiday Monday an exciting end-to-end game was played out at **Wrexham**. Waide Fairhurst opened the scoring for the Silkmen in the 40th minute when he sent a low skidding shot into the net. Inevitably former Silkmen Connor Jennings equalised for the home side in the 45th minute. It was becoming something of a habit for the opposition to start the second half as the stronger team and the Welshmen were no different taking the lead in the 61st minute through Shane Hudson. Macclesfield drew level in the 74th minute when captain Paul Turnbull headed home a Fairhurst cross, the Silkmen hanging on to earn a 2-2 draw. Domaine Rouse made his debut from the substitutes' bench for Macclesfield.

In the final match of the month Macclesfield entertained **Eastleigh** on their first visit to the Moss Rose. Playing as a well co-ordinated team Macclesfield coped with a very physical opposition who made many rash challenges. Domaine Rouse, making his first full start opened the scoring in the 32nd minute with an excellently taken header. Macclesfield dominated the match other than for a

brief spell in the second half, midfielder Paul Lewis doubled the lead when he met Paul Turnbull's expertly taken free-kick with a flying header, a lead which the Silkmen held to win the match 2-0.

Unbeaten in the month, four clean sheets and 12 points on the board the team were in seventh position.

SEPTEMBER

The first defeat of the season came at **Chester** with former Silkmen John Rooney scoring the only goal of the match, a well struck free-kick, to give Chester their first win of their campaign. Just to rub salt in the wound, another former Silkman Kieron Charnock was their Man of the Match. Will Haining made his debut for Macclesfield.

On a Tuesday evening the first half was a low key affair against then top-of-the-table **FC Halifax Town** at the Moss Rose. The second half was a much livelier affair with the Shaymen taking the lead in the 51st minute when 'keeper Rhys Taylor parried the ball only for it to bounce off former Silkman Scott Boden and over the line. Their lead was short lived as five minutes later Arthur Ganhoua picked up the ball inside the box, shrugged off two defenders drilling the ball into the bottom corner of the net to equalise for the Silkmen.. Halifax had the ball in the net during added time but with Rhys Taylor having been fouled and on the ground requiring attention, the assistant referee flagged for a foul, the score remaining 1-1.

At **Dover Athletic** there was one bright moment in the 77th minute, Chris Holroyd taking advantage of a defensive error, broke free with his powerful shot leaving goalkeeper Mitch Walker with no chance to give the Silkmen a smash and grab 1-0 win. Adam Thomas made his debut for Macclesfield.

On another Tuesday evening, **Gateshead** played their part in an entertaining match at the Moss Rose which either side could have won. The home side shaded the first half against a strong, tall opposition deservedly going in at the interval leading by 1-0, the goal scored in the 34th minute by Arthur Gnahoua. In the 66th minute Gateshead created a sweeping move down the pitch culminating in Danny Wright equalising to take a share of the points.

When **Southport** were the visitors, the Silkmen had the match wrapped up in the first half. The ever reliable centre back Luke Waterfall opened the scoring in the ninth minute with a superb volley from a Wade Fairhurst corner, a brilliant free-kick from 20 yards by Paul Turnbull doubled the score with Luke Waterfall on the score sheet again in the 42nd minute when another free-kick by Turnbull was placed in the area which Waterfall headed home. There were no further goals in the second half which proved to be rather an anti-climax but Macclesfield gained a rare win against Southport. Manager John Askey celebrated his 100th match as manager/caretaker manager.

A trip to **Lincoln City**, managed by former Silkmen manager Gary Simpson and including five former Silkmen, brought no joy for the Silkmen. The Imps were two goals to the good by 19 minutes and despite being reduced to 10 men when Jordan Barrow was dismissed, Lincoln held on to win their first match in the last four.

On another Tuesday evening, on this occasion at **Altrincham**, Macclesfield's first shot on target did not come until the 81st minute and, in the end, they were beaten by a 'wonder' goal scored by James Lawrie in the 90th minute.

Although picking up eight points in the month Macclesfield slipped to 11th position.

OCTOBER

October proved to be a fairly satisfactory month picking up a total of eight points from four matches.

Manager John Askey continued using a formation with a sole striker in Waide Fairhurst, a five-man midfield and a four-man backline. The visit of **Forest Green Rovers** continued the theme of former Silkmen in the opposing team, this time the formidable Jon Parkin. The visitors played the first half with ease taking the lead in the 11th minute through Elliott Freer, and whilst the Silkmen had their chances the score remained 1-0 at the interval. Macclesfield applied themselves much better in the second half and took the lead through a powerful header by Paul Lewis and then a shot from the edge of the D into the top corner by Waide Fairhurst. For the remainder of the match Forest Green Rovers controlled possession, passing the ball fluently and grabbed an equaliser through a soft shot by veteran substitute Lee Hughes which was surprisingly not held by 'keeper Rhys Taylor.

Top-of-the-table **Barnet** were the next visitors but at least there were no former Silkmen in their team. Neither side were able to capitalise on their goalscoring opportunities in the first half. For Macclesfield, Paul Turnbull missed a good chance, Paul Lewis tried an acrobatic overhead kick which was saved by the Barnet 'keeper and Waide Fairhurst was denied by a one-handed save. For Barnet, John Akinde had the ball in the net but his effort was ruled off-side. The second half soon came alive, when after five minutes left back Scott Barrow hit a brilliant goal from 35 yards and 16 minutes later the ball skidded off Chris Holroyd's back to made the score 2-0. Barnet continued to play with pace and after a string of corners, the tall centre forward Akinde rose above the defence to pull a goal back, however, Macclesfield held on to earn a very creditable victory.

Rain before the match made the pitch heavy at **Dartford**. In difficult conditions the score remained 0-0 at half time. Adriano Moke was introduced at the start of the second half in place of Arthur Gnahoua, and he came the closest to scoring when his shot frustratingly hit the inside of the post, rolled along the goal line and rebounded off the other post into the hands of the 'keeper. With five minutes to go Dartford took the lead but Macclesfield did not give up. Two minutes later a sweeping Macclesfield move saw Waide Fairhurst picking out substitute and recent loan signing Matthew Barnes-Homer in the six yard box, who fired home from close range to give the Silkmen a share of the points which had looked unlikely only minutes earlier. The team travelled by Virgin Trains to London on a similar deal to the 2013-14 season meeting the team coach at Euston station. This was the first point gained when the team had travelled by train!

With signing of Matthew Barnes-Homer, Askey changed to a 4-4-2 formation but against **Dover Athletic** at the Moss Rose the Silkmen found it difficult to breach their five-man defence. Able defender George Pilkington had to be substituted on 31 minutes when he was injured with young Dan Cowan replacing him, Andy Halls moving to centre back allowing Cowan to play at right back. In an encounter which provided few highlights it was the ever-improving midfielder Paul Lewis who won the match for Macclesfield when he was on hand to slot home a pull-back by Chris Holroyd. This victory gave Macclesfield their first season double and took them to seventh position with 28 points, only two points from the play-off positions.

NOVEMBER

By now the season was taking shape: in the six matches in November there was only one defeat, three clean sheets, retention of the season unbeaten home record and a move into the play-off positions.

At **Nuneaton Town**, Macclesfield rued their missed chances. Waide Fairhurst was unfortunate when he rattled the crossbar, Matthew Barnes-Homer missed two easy chances and Arthur Gnahoua

should have scored in added time but Nuneaton equalised in the 92nd minute, Paul Turnbull having given the Silkmen the lead in the 50th minute.

Referee Darren England was unhappy with Chester's purple away strip as he was of the opinion that there was insufficient difference with Macclesfield's blue strip with the result that **Chester** had to wear Macclesfield's green away shirt, complete with Macclesfield squad numbers and names although most of the Chester players were wearing shirts with their designated squad number. As the match was taking place on Armistice Day, a minute's silence was observed before kick-off. Chester had just knocked out Football League side Southend United in the first round of the FA Cup and were still on a high subjecting Macclesfield to an onslaught during the early stages of the first half. But a penalty save by Rhys Taylor and two clearances off the line gave Macclesfield hope. Waide Fairhurst struck home a penalty in the 39th minute and three minutes later let fly from 35 yards, the ball hitting the top corner. In the 52nd minute Macclesfield made it 3-0, Chester defender Ben Heneghan stopping Chris Holroyd's shot only for Matthew Barnes-Homer to be on hand to fire home the loose ball. Heneghan pulled a goal back for the visitors two minutes later with the match finishing 3-1 in favour of the Silkmen.

At **Welling United**, Macclesfield had a defensive set-up with five in the back line and Will Haining playing just in front of the defence. Nevertheless, this was a backs-to-the-wall and gritty performance. The Silkmen had, yet again, their 'keeper Rhys Taylor to thank for keeping them in this match together with Scott Barrow who cleared off the line. Welling hit the crossbar and the post, bossing much of the match. Not the best of performances by the Silkmen but they kept another clean sheet in the 0-0 draw the one point earned taking them into a play-off position for the first time.

Struggling **Alfreton Town** found it difficult to get a foothold in the first half at the Moss Rose with Macclesfield taking a deserved lead in the 14th minute with a brilliant solo goal from Scott Barrow. He picked the ball up in the Alfreton half, some 70 yards out, running forward beating several defenders and then coolly slotting home. Towards the end of the match it looked as though Macclesfield would only win by a single goal but the 2-0 win was sealed with a well-placed goal by Waide Fairhurst.

Another home match followed with **Torquay United** the visitors. Macclesfield had the brighter start but Torquay soon came into their own with the Silkmen having to defend set pieces which they did with more certainty than they had of late. Chris Holroyd had the ball in the back of the net but his effort was ruled to have been off-side. The score remained 0-0 at half time. Eleven minutes into the second half Chris Holroyd's shot at goal looped off a Torquay defender falling to midfielder Danny Whitaker who scored with a first-time left-foot shot from 15 yards which turned out to be the winning goal.

At **Barnet** Macclesfield took the lead in the 41st minute through a strike by winger Adriano Moke. Silkmen 'keeper Rhys Taylor was again in fine form stopping everything which was fired at him. Also Scott Barrow was unlucky when his shot was deflected onto the post. A clinical four minute spell in the second half saw the Bees strike twice through Andy Yiadom and John Akinde and matters could have been worse when Lee Cook hit the upright. With Macclesfield chasing the equaliser Barnet's Curtis Weston hit a third to give Barnet a 3-1 win to retain top place. On loan striker Denny Johnstone made his debut from the substitutes' bench for Macclesfield.

And so ended a nine-match unbeaten run by the Silkmen, however, they completed the month in fifth position with 39 points.

Scott Barrow was named Vanarama Player of the Month for November.

DECEMBER

There was rather a mixed bag of fortunes during the month of December, but the league table position improved again.

Originally scheduled for 4 January 2015, this match was brought forward to 6 December as both the Silkmen and the visitors, **Woking**, had been knocked out of the FA Cup. Woking enjoyed the better of the opening exchanges and often pegged Macclesfield into their own half. However a poacher's goal from Matthew Barnes-Homer put the Silkmen ahead when he pounced on the ball after the Woking 'keeper Ross Warner could only parry away Danny Whitaker's 25-yard shot. The start of the second half saw the Cards on the offensive equalising after six minutes through Dean Morgan. End-to-end play then ensued with Macclesfield having to withstand the physical approach adopted by the visitors. Paul Turnbull won the match for Macclesfield in the 89th minute when a pull-back from the by-line by Barnes-Homer was cut out by a Woking defender the ball falling at the feet of Turnbull who drove home a low ball, leaving the Silkmen to see out a nervous five minutes of added time.

Throughout the season in order to reduce match day costs a small part of the London Road Terrace was closed for several matches and the John Askey Terrace was often closed when there were few visiting supporters. For this match the position was exacerbated when there was an unexpected shortage of stewards with only the Moss Lane stand and the Star Lane end open. Those supporters in the Bristol Street Motors stand being accommodated in the Moss Lane stand and those from the London Road terrace accommodated in the Star Lane terrace.

The date of the next league match was also moved, but only by a day, from Tuesday to Wednesday as the hosts, **Aldershot Town**, had played Rochdale in the FA Cup on the previous Sunday. It was rather a drab first half with few chances and both sides struggling with the wind, but Macclesfield gained all three points through a second half goal by Danny Whitaker to take the Silkmen to second place in the table.

Macclesfield enjoyed their biggest win of the season at **Alfreton Town** when they ran out 5-1 winners and star treatment on the front page of the Non-League newspaper. A heavy pitch did not stop the Silkmen but it was the home side who took the lead in the eighth minute when Andy Halls fouled Dan Bradley in the box, Bradley Wood converting the penalty, but the Silkmen capitalised on Alfreton's defensive mistakes. Three first half goals in 10 minutes gave the Silkmen an unassailable lead. Two came from Matthew Barnes-Homer with close range shots and one from a bullet 25-yard shot from Danny Whitaker. The Match was sealed 10 minutes into the second half Chris Holroyd slotting home from close range. The lead could have been increased further but Waide Fairhurst's spot kick was saved. Substitute Denny Johnstone put the icing on the cake when he scored his first goal for the Silkmen to give them their second double. The last occasion the team had scored five goals in a league match was on 2 January 2005 when they beat Wycombe Wanderers 5-4.

Prior to the Boxing Day match at the Moss Rose against **Grimsby Town** Macclesfield were undefeated in all 13 home matches but this record was ended in the fourth minute when former Silkman Jack Mackreth scored the only goal of the match, 'keeper Rhys Taylor only able to parry a strong shot away for a short distance, and with the defence unusually slow of foot Mackreth was quickest to react. The match was played in poor conditions with a swirling wind and rain sweeping across the ground in the second half. The attendance was 2786, the highest of the season including 694 from Grimsby. The visiting fans were in good voice throughout adding to the overall atmosphere.

Two days later Macclesfield made the trip to **Bristol Rovers** playing in front of a crowd of 6943 including 140 Silkmen supporters. Evidently down to the bare bones manager John Askey only nominated three substitutes and missing from the starting line-up were Waide Fairhurst, Liam Hogan (broken foot) and Paul Turnbull (ill). Whilst performing well Macclesfield were overall no match for Rovers who notched up their eleventh consecutive league win although the Silkmen managed to hold out until one minute before half time when Andy Moorhouse opened the scoring for the home side. It was said that he was lucky to have been on the pitch as he had allegedly struck Andy Halls with his elbow earlier in the half. Further goals came from Nathan Blissett (65 minutes), Matt Taylor (76 minutes) and from the penalty spot Ellis Harrison (83 minutes).

Nevertheless, Macclesfield finished the month in third position with a total of 48 points.



Chris Holroyd celebrating scoring in the 1-0 home victory against Braintree Town on 9 August



**Adriano Moke scoring his first goal for the Silkmen in the 3-2 away win at AFC Telford United
12 August**



**Luke Waterfall presented with the Man of the Match Award having scored two goals in the 3-2
win against Southport on 20 September**



Paul Lewis heads home the first goal in the 2-2 home draw against Forest Green Rovers 4 October



Scott Barrow (left) celebrates scoring from 35 yards in the 2-1 home win against Barnet 7 October



Dan Cowan who replaced the injured George Pilkington in the match against Dover on 18 October and went on to make many workmanlike appearances



Goalkeeper Rhys Taylor, Man of the Match, Chester 11 November



Danny Whitaker (second right) celebrating having scored the only goal in the home win against Torquay United 25 November

JANUARY

A good month, winning all three matches played but matches against AFC Telford United, Altrincham and Braintree Town were postponed.

On New Year's Day Macclesfield got their revenge against **Grimsby Town** in the return fixture at Blundell Park. Denny Johnstone opened the scoring for the Silkmen in the 30th minute when a Waide Fairhurst shot was parried away by the Mariners' goalkeeper, allowing Johnstone to drill the ball home from close range. Seven minutes later Jon-Paul Pittman equalised for the home side. The second half was rather a scrappy affair, but as the game became stretched midfielder Danny Whitaker pressing forward latched onto an Adriano Moke cross to finish from a tight angle to give the Silkmen a 2-1 victory. Waide Fairhurst made his 100th appearance in all competitions for Macclesfield.

At **Kidderminster Harriers**, Macclesfield found it difficult to create chances in the first half on a sticky pitch with Kidderminster coming closest to scoring when a shot by Aman Verma was cleared off the line by Danny Whitaker. After the introduction of Matthew Barnes-Homer for Denny Johnstone Macclesfield began to look like the team more likely to score and two goals in three minutes gave them victory. In the 66th minute George Pilkington headed Paul Turnbull's corner back across the goal, Alex Grant poking home, but it was Waide Fairhurst's goal three minutes later which created a worldwide sensation. He collected a poor clearance from the Kidderminster 'keeper sending it back over the 'keeper's head from 45 yards. A You Tube upload went viral with at least 300,000 viewings. The goal featured in headlines in Poland, Spain, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Italy and Germany. Fox Sports in Australia included a special feature and Jennie Ball, a member of the Silkmen media team, spoke live on talkSport about the goal. Waide's goal was voted the Silkmen Goal of the Season by Macclesfield supporters.

For the third league match of the month **Lincoln City** were the visitors. Macclesfield were second best in the first half against a tall and physical Lincoln side but, completely against the run of play, they took the lead in the 37th minute. An effort by Adriano Moke was deflected into the path of Andy Halls who drove a low ball into the area, Denny Johnstone sticking out a foot, the ball beating the 'keeper. The second half saw Macclesfield coping much better with Lincoln's play and extended their lead in the 52nd minute. Lincoln got themselves in a tangle at a Macclesfield corner, Waide Fairhurst chested the ball goalwards allowing Paul Lewis to poke home. The Silkmen wrapped things up in the 90th minute, Matthew Barnes-Homer scoring from an excellent through ball by substitute Danny Rowe. Rhys Taylor made his 100th appearance in all competitions for Macclesfield.

With 57 points Macclesfield were in second place (on goals scored) at the end of the month. John Askey was Vanarama manager of the Month for January. Past manager's winning the Manager of the Month Award for the month of January are Sammy McIlroy (1998) and Brian Booth (1984).

FEBRUARY

The momentum was maintained during the first half of the month but there was a significant defeat at the end.

At this time chairman Mark Blower provided an important explanation of the club's strategy towards the budget for the playing staff. *'The backdrop to our achievement this year makes our success all the more significant. The club has to be sustainable and live within its means. This meant setting a playing budget at the start of the season which turned out to be one of the lowest in the division. That way, the gate receipts from games, the ongoing investment from the owners and the revenue generated by the volunteers, who give so much time for the club, would enable the bills to be paid each month, repay some of the historical debt and ensure that the future of the club was not put at risk – this had to be the principal objective.*

With this in mind it was decided to overspend in the first few months of the season with the objective of getting as many points on the board as early [as] possible to ensure that, as a minimum we stay in this division. Under John's guidance, this strategy led to our place in the division being secured by Christmas and the club having entered the play-off places in mid-November. With primary target of the campaign secured. It was time to reassess the season, our goals changed.

With a further financial commitment from the owner and donations from longstanding supporters, the player budget was increased by 25% in order to keep the squad together with Matthew Barnes-Homer, Rhys Taylor and Adriano Moke all signing new deals. We were also able to add to the group with the recent signing of Danny Rowe and Lee Bell joined the squad from Burton Albion.

We are all of course delighted with how John and the players have performed so far this season and how far we have come and we are now focused on continuing this progress for the remainder of the season.'

A great deal of hard work had been carried out by officials, ground staff and volunteers to clear the pitch of snow, without their efforts it would have been impossible to play the next match. Macclesfield were not at their best against **Welling United** with the visitors in the driving seat and taking the lead in the 20th minute through Dominic Vose. However, a penalty for the Silkmen saw Waide Fairhurst scoring from the spot to equalise. Just before half time, making his debut for Welling, Anthony Jeffrey picked up his second caution leaving Welling to play the remainder of the match with 10 men. In the second half it was difficult to see from the play which team was a man short. Welling took the lead in the 68th minute, Jason Williams delicately chipping the ball over Rhys

Taylor. Having played with three up front to this point, in the 70th minute Askey introduced winger Danny Rowe in place of Paul Turnbull changing to a 4-4-2 formation with Fairhurst and Matthew Barnes-Homer up front, Adriano Moke falling back to a wide left midfield position. This change did the trick with Barnes-Homer winning the match for the Silkmen with two goals in the 75th and 83rd minutes.

Three days later, on a cool but dry Tuesday evening **Altrincham** came to the Moss Rose having already inflicted two 1-0 defeats on the Silkmen earlier in the season. The Silkmen dominated the first half and justifiably took the lead in the 29th minute, Matthew Barnes-Homer heading home a perfectly flighted cross from Scott Barrow, with the score surprisingly remaining 1-0 at half time. At the start of the second half Altrincham introduced Kyle Perry for Sean Williams, the change was the catalyst for a much improved performance by the visitors, but it was Macclesfield who doubled their lead after four minutes, Adriano Moke converting an excellent cross by Danny Whitaker. Altrincham got their act together earning several set pieces, and it was from a free-kick that they pulled a goal back, substitute Perry forcing the ball over the line in the 63rd minute. Despite pressure from Altrincham, Macclesfield defended well to win the match 2-1 but not without giving the fans several anxious moments including Altrincham having a goal disallowed for off-side.

Since Macclesfield returned to the Conference, **Southport** have been something of a bogey side especially at Haigh Avenue. Having enjoyed the better of the first half, Macclesfield could not find the back of the net. The deadlock was broken in the 67th minute when Danny Whitaker's deft header gave the Silkmen the lead, but 10 minutes later Richard Brodie hooked the ball over his shoulder beyond 'keeper Rhys Taylor. Macclesfield created chances but failed to make the most of them, including substitute Waide Fairhurst crashing ball against the bar, the ball rebounding off a defender back to the 'keeper. Having started this match in second position and by dropping two points they missed the chance to make up ground on leaders Barnet and with Bristol Rovers winning at Grimsby, Rovers leap-frogged over Macclesfield who dropped to third.

The final match of the month was played in front of BT Sport television cameras at **Eastleigh**. Eastleigh officially opened their new Mackoy Community stand with a sponsor purchasing 2000 tickets for members of local junior football clubs which raised the crowd to a record of 4126 for an Eastleigh home match. This was a most disappointing performance by Macclesfield who never got into the match, only managing a single shot on target and played in their dark green away shirts which rarely seemed to bring them luck. The first of Eastleigh's four goals came from a free-kick when it looked as though Thierry Audel, in his first match back with the Silkmen, had got the ball cleanly and making matters worse the ball skimmed off his back into the goal. Macclesfield played a 4-3-3 formation but Matthew Barnes-Homer often looked isolated up front. Eastleigh looked a well-drilled side who played well as a team and crafted some excellent goals. Jai Reason was the architect of their victory having a hand in all four goals including scoring their third. On this performance Macclesfield never looked like potential champions despite John Askey stating before the match in a TV interview that they were aiming for the top. Theo Bailey-Jones made his debut for Macclesfield.

At the end of the month the team were in fourth position with 64 points.

MARCH

A disappointing month overall notable for only three goals being scored, none of which were netted by a recognised striker, although three further clear sheets were achieved.

The month started well when Macclesfield visited **Braintree Town** on a Tuesday evening, the match having been re-arranged from 31 January when the pitch had been unplayable. There was a low attendance of 445, 45 of whom were Silkmen supporters. Danny Whitaker did not travel as his wife

was about to give birth and Lee Bell was missing as he had been injured at Eastleigh. Both Andy Halls and George Pilkington had both been ill the previous day but still played, Halls out of position in the centre of midfield. Paul Turnbull was included as a substitute although John Askey did not want to use him as he was still suffering with a calf injury. Nevertheless, the Silkmen won the match with a single first half goal scored by Alex Grant. However, Braintree came into their own in the second half, but splendid goalkeeping by Rhys Taylor kept them at bay. Having beaten Braintree on the opening day of the season, this was the Silkmen's third double of the season.

At the Moss Rose, Macclesfield failed to capitalise on defeats for the two sides above them in the table against in-form **Aldershot Town**, the match ending 0-0. The visitors could have taken a first half lead but yet again excellent goalkeeping by Rhys Taylor denied them. Macclesfield seemed tired and lacked pace throughout the match although they tested the Shots' goalkeeper who pulled off several brilliant saves.

The following Tuesday Macclesfield entertained **AFC Telford United** in a re-arranged match originally scheduled for 20 January as Telford were involved in a FA Trophy match on that day. Thierry Audel's 18th minute goal gave Macclesfield another home win, however, the score could have been higher but for missed shots. Bottom side Telford could have snatched a point at the end but fortunately Adam Farrell's excellent shot flew inches wide of the post. This win gave Macclesfield their fourth double of the season.

At **Gateshead**, Macclesfield faced a side who had nine players missing, either injured or suspended, and only 15 professional players available, two of whom were goalkeepers. The match was played on a hard, sandy, unwatered pitch with little grass. The Heed took the lead in the 21st minute but only a minute later the Silkmen were back on level terms when George Pilkington headed home. Macclesfield seemed to lose their way in the second half, Gateshead taking all three points with a second goal in the 67th minute. At this critical time in the season Macclesfield lost ground on Bristol Rovers who drew their match, and new leaders Barnet who had chalked up a victory.

Nuneaton Town came to the Moss Rose unbeaten in their last five games having kept four clean sheets on the bounce and knowing that the Silkmen had never beaten them. A poor spectacle from start to finish with Macclesfield playing well below par often frustrated by the tall, strong Nuneaton defence, although they did not help themselves with many inaccurate forward long balls. Nephew of Macclesfield assistant manager, Onome Sodje, came on from the substitutes' bench to score the winning goal for Nuneaton in the 90th minute, somewhat ironic as they had snatched a draw in the 92nd minute at their ground earlier in the season. Mike Phenix made his debut for Macclesfield.

Conference promotion rivals played out a stalemate at the Moss Rose in front of BT Sport cameras, with **Bristol Rovers** missing the opportunity of going top by dropping two points. Macclesfield deserved a point in a much improved performance following the defeat against Nuneaton the previous week. Both sides created chances but could not convert them and Macclesfield looked to have been denied a good penalty claim in the second half when the ball was handled in the area. And so the match finished 0-0. Jack Sampson made his debut for Macclesfield. There was an excellent example of the fine work undertaken by the club's Community Sports Trust at this match. A community football day was organised for eight hearing impaired children jointly by the Community Sports Trust and the Paediatric Audiology Department of Macclesfield Hospital. The visit included a football coaching session, meeting the players, formation of a guard of honour at the entrance tunnel as the players came out and a half-time football match on the pitch when they played against each other, the result a 2-2 draw.

At the end of the month fourth position had been retained with a total of 72 points.

APRIL

Although the Silkmen only lost one match during the month of April, with season as a whole having promised so much there was a disappointing end.

Originally scheduled for Saturday 4 April, the match at **FC Halifax Town** was brought forward a day to Good Friday. This match was played at a fast pace despite the poor surface much of which was covered in sand. Macclesfield went behind in the third minute when Thierry Audel was unfortunate to score his second own goal of the season, deflecting the ball past Rhys Taylor. However, the Silkmen overall enjoyed a good first half with Jack Sampson making his first full start for the club scoring two goals in the 15th and 31st minutes enabling the Silkmen to go in at the interval leading 2-1. Halifax were the quickest out of the blocks in the second half but when Waide Fairhurst gestured a head butt towards Halifax player Scott McManus, he was dismissed by the referee. His red card proved to be the turning point of the match with Halifax coming back into the game and loanee Will Hatfield equalising for the Shaymen in the 75th minute. Macclesfield could have won the match but Chris Holroyd fired just over the bar in added time for the match to finish 2-2. After the final whistle, Halifax player Adam Smith attacked Chris Holroyd who was standing on his own. This action resulted in a melee, the result of which Adam Smith receiving a red card as did Macclesfield's Andy Halls for violent conduct (Halls had received his 13th yellow card of the campaign during the match).

On Easter Monday Macclesfield entertained **Wrexham** on a warm and sunny day. Macclesfield enjoyed a good start when veteran midfielder Danny Whitaker gave them the lead in the 14th minute. Although the Silkmen gained in confidence as the half progressed, it was the visitors through former Silkmen Connor Jennings who found the back of the net to equalise. In the second half Wrexham became a force to be reckoned with but Macclesfield were not to be out done. Scott Barrow had replaced the injured George Pilkington, taking up his usual position at left back with Alex Grant moving to replace Pilkington at centre back. In the 57th minute left back Barrow made a brilliant run up the right wing, sent a perfect centre to Lee Bell who headed home to give the Silkmen a 2-1 lead. The replacement of forward Jack Sampson with defensive midfielder Will Haining in the 81st minute left Matthew Barnes-Homer as the sole striker. With Macclesfield looking certain of taking all three points, in the 93rd minute after a defensive error and a static goalkeeper, Robbie Evans equalised for the visitors leaving the Silkmen faithful somewhat deflated (and annoyed). Lee Bell made his 100th appearance in all competitions for Macclesfield.

A visit to **Forest Green Rovers** came next. Macclesfield got off to a bad start when Rovers' Aarran Racine headed home from a corner in the 6th minute. Worse was to come in the 22nd minute when former Silkmen favourite 'the Beast' Jon Parkin seeing goalkeeper Rhys Taylor off his line struck home from the centre-circle to double the home side's lead. Two minute later Lee Bell struck a 20-yard shot to pull a goal back. The Silkmen started the second half well but missed three goal scoring opportunities. A fluke cross cum shot beat Taylor to give Rovers a 3-1 victory and go into fourth position, the Silkmen moving down to fifth.

On Tuesday 14 April, AFC Halifax Town and Eastleigh played their outstanding match at the Shay which Eastleigh won pushing Macclesfield out of the play-off positions to sixth place.

Dartford came to the Moss Rose having already been relegated from the Vanarama Conference. Macclesfield made hard work of their victory and were almost undone early in the match when they conceded a penalty; fortunately the spot kick was saved by goalkeeper Rhys Taylor. In the 22nd minute a long throw into the box by Alex Grant was not cleared by the Dartford defence, the ball falling at the feet of midfielder Lee Bell who sent a low drive through a crowd of players to score his third goal in as many matches. The score remained 1-0 at half time and the second half continued in

the same vein until the introduction of the speedy Adriano Moke in the 60th minute when he replaced Danny Rowe. The pace of the game increased and Thierry Audel doubled the Silkmen's tally in the 80th minute, Paul Turnbull's free-kick was helped on by Chris Holroyd's overhead kick sending the ball high into the air falling to Audel who swivelled and smashed the ball home. But that was not the end of the action. Macclesfield's George Pilkington was dismissed as the last man when he fouled Tom Bradbrook and in the 92nd minute Dartford's Ebrima Adams was given his marching orders for a second caution.

The final match of the season took place at **Torquay United**. Before kick-off there was a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the fire at Bradford City's ground 30 years earlier. Macclesfield, needing to win this match with other results going their way to move back into a play-off position, started slowly, the home side taking the lead in the 14th minute. At the start of the second half Macclesfield were more determined and equalised through Waide Fairhurst in the 71st minute. With Forest Green Rovers drawing at Dover Athletic, only a win would take Macclesfield back to fifth position, the Silkmen tried their best to score the winning goal but everyone realised that it was not to be when Fairhurst smashed wide in the dying moments of the match. Even then Torquay came the closest to winning when they hit the woodwork. And so the match finished in a 1-1 draw, the Silkmen completing the season in a very creditable sixth position with 78 points.

Whilst the team had done well to achieve sixth position after the trauma at the beginning of the season, there was a tinge of disappointment as John Askey's side had promised so much for the majority of the season. Midfielder Danny Whitaker summed up the position well when he said that missing out on all three points at Torquay was not the reason that the Silkmen had failed to make the play-offs, it was down to the points which had been dropped in earlier matches. But, more importantly, the target of remaining members of the Conference had been achieved.

Awards and Achievements

Player of the Year	George Pilkington
Players' Player of the Year	Rhys Taylor and George Pilkington
Most Improved Player	Paul Lewis
Jean Ridgeway Award	Rhys Taylor
Andy Mellor Award	The team as a whole
Bill's Ball Bag	Paul Lewis
(A new award for the 2014-15 season by the kit sponsors of goal keeping coach Bill Gordon)	
Goal of the Season	Waide Fairhurst (Kidderminster Harriers)

These days in Non-League football with short term contracts in place, it is often difficult for players to achieve 100 appearances for a single club, but during this season four players achieved this milestone for the Silkmen. Whilst one player received the congratulations of the club, this opportunity is taken to congratulate all four for their valuable contribution.

Waide Fairhurst	1 January 2015	Grimsby Town
Rhys Taylor	24 January 2015	Lincoln City
Chris Holroyd	24 March 2015	Crewe Alexandra (Cheshire Senior Cup)
Lee Bell	6 April 2015	Wrexham

John Askey has been in charge for 142 matches as manager/caretaker manager gaining a 40.84% win ratio, only second to Sammy McIlroy MBE for all matches over the last 21 years.

Danny Whitaker entered the club's Top 25 all-time appearances, completing the season in 19th position with 281 appearances in all competitions.



Defender Alex Grant delighted to have scored the first goal at Kidderminster Harriers 17 January



Waide Fairhurst (second right) celebrates with team mates scoring the second goal at Kidderminster in the 2-0 win



Matthew Barnes-Homer secured a 3-2 home win against Welling United on 7 February, a match which was only possible after work by staff and volunteers to clear the pitch of snow



Thierry Audel scoring the only goal against AFC Telford United on 3 March



Jack Sampson leaves the AFC Halifax Town players dejected after scoring one of his two goals in the away victory on 3 April



Lee Bell (right) celebrates with Matthew Barnes-Homer in the 2-2 home draw against Wrexham on 6 April

To complement this written account, details relating to match teams, scorers, attendances, individual player statistics, general information and player profiles can all be found within this website, www.silkmenarchives.org.uk

Grateful thanks are extended to the club's official photographer Peter Hilton for providing the photographs included in this chapter.



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MTFC Official Photographer



Former MTFC playing colleagues - Steve Burr, Chester manager and John Askey, Macclesfield manager

**MACCLESFIELD TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB
PLAYERS 2014-15 SEASON**

Tomi Adelaye	Loan from Stoke U21 team – January 2015
Thierry Audel	Transfer from Crewe Alexandra – February 2015
Will Bailey	Existing MTFC player
Theo Bailey-Jones	Loan from Wrexham – January 2015
Matthew Barnes-Homer	Initially loan from Whitehawk – October 2014. Signed permanently November 2014
Scott Barrow	Free agent, previously with Tamworth – summer 2014
Lee Bell	Loan from Burton Albion – February 2015
Richie Branagan	Existing MTFC player
Dan Cowan	Former MTFC Youth team – summer 2014
Jack Disney	Former MTFC Youth team – summer 2014
Waide Fairhurst	Transfer from Lincoln City – summer 2014
Liam Gibson	Transfer from Bolton Wanderers – summer 2014
Arthur Gnahoua	Existing MTFC player
Diaz David Gonzalez	Transfer from Caudel, Spain – summer 2014
Alex Grant	Loan from Stoke U21 team – August 2014
Will Haining	Transfer from Hyde – summer 2014
Andy Halls	Existing player
Liam Hogan	Loan from Fleetwood Town – November 2014
Chris Holroyd	Existing MTFC player
Jack Hunter	Former MTFC Youth team – summer 2014
Byron Jenkins	Former MTFC Youth team manager
Denny Johnstone	Loan from Birmingham City – December 2014
Malachi Lavelle-Moore	Transfer from Notts County – summer 2014
Paul Lewis	Existing MTFC player
Adriano Moke	Transfer from Stockport County – summer 2014
Conor O’Keefe	Former MTFC Youth team – January 2015
Mike Phenix	Loan from Barnsley – March 2015
George Pilkington	Existing MTFC player
Domaine Rouse	Transfer from Droylsden – summer 2014
Danny Rowe	Transfer from AFC Fylde December 2014
Jack Sampson	Loan from Morecambe February 2015
Rhys Taylor	Existing MTFC player
Adam Thomas	Loan from Stoke U21 team – August 2014
Milan Thompson	Former MTFC Youth team
James Thorne	Transfer from Salford City – February 2015
Sean Tighe	Existing MTFC player
Paul Turnbull	Existing MTFC player
Luke Waterfall	Loan from Scunthorpe United August 2014
Danny Whitaker	Existing MTFC player

**MACCLESFIELD TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB
OFFICIAL TEAM PHOTOGRAPH
SEASON 2014-2015**



Back Row

Will Bailey, Dan Cowan, Paul Lewis, Connor O'Keefe, Rhys Taylor, Ritchie Branagan, Luke Waterfall,
Liam Gibson, Scott Barrow

Middle Row

Bill Gordon (GK Coach), Paul Etchells (Kit Man), Byron Jenkins (Coach), Sean Tighe, Milan Thompson,
Malachi Lavelle-Moore, Jack Hunter, Jack Disney, Andy Halls, Waide Fairhurst, Rae Ingram (Masseur),
Ian Liversedge (Physio), Martin Ollier (Physio)

Front Row

Adriano Moke, Danny Whitaker, Paul Turnbull, John Askey (Manager), Efe Sodje (Assistant
Manager), George Pilkington, Chris Holroyd, Arthur Gnahoua