

Eastbourne Town Football Club, founded on 19 October 1881 as Devonshire Park F.C., holds the distinction of being Sussex's oldest senior football club. The club's first ground was Devonshire Park, a venue now known for hosting a major pre-Wimbledon tennis tournament. The football club played there until 1886, when tennis became the dominant sport at the park, leading to the football team's relocation to the nearby Saffrons Field. This move marked the beginning of a long association with the Saffrons, where the club still plays today. The field is named after the saffron crocus, which had been cultivated on the site for medicinal purposes.

In 1889, the club was renamed Eastbourne FC. Known for its 'gentlemen amateurs,' Eastbourne soon became a force in Sussex football, winning the Sussex Senior Cup eight times in the first 15 years of its existence. This era cemented the club's reputation as a major player in county football. The early 1900s saw further successes, including the club's first international trophy in 1904, when Eastbourne won the Paris New Years Tournament. This victory highlighted the club's growing stature beyond local competitions.

The club joined the South Eastern League in 1905, playing against reserve teams from big clubs like Arsenal, Chelsea, and Tottenham Hotspur. Despite struggling in the first season, which resulted in relegation, Eastbourne continued to build its profile. In 1907, the club aligned with the Amateur Football Alliance and became a founding member of the Southern Amateur League, where it remained until after World War II. Another international triumph came in 1909 when the club won the "Challenge International du Nord," a competition that included amateur teams from France, Belgium, and other European countries.

The 1920s were a golden era for Eastbourne Town, with two league championships and two national AFA Senior Cup victories. The club also made multiple appearances in the Sussex Senior Cup finals, winning several titles during this period. By the 1930s, the club had become a fixture of Sussex football, with large crowds regularly attending matches at the Saffrons. Improvements to the ground included the construction of a wooden grandstand and terracing on the popular Town Hall side.

During World War II, the Saffrons survived intact, and friendly matches were frequently played there. Post-war, Eastbourne Town joined the Corinthian League and later moved into the Athenian League following a merger in 1963. The immediate post-war years saw attendances peak at an average of 3,000, with a record crowd of 7,378 attending an FA Cup tie against Hastings United in 1953. The club also enjoyed further successes in the Sussex Senior Cup and RUR Charity Cup.

In 1971, after being known as "Town Club" for over 80 years, the club adopted its current name, Eastbourne Town FC. Unfortunately, the club's fortunes began to wane in the 1970s, and by 1976, declining attendances led to their resignation from the Athenian League. However, upon joining the Sussex County League, Eastbourne immediately lifted the championship and reached the Sussex Senior Cup final in their first season.

The 1990s saw the installation of floodlights at the Saffrons, which helped the club stage a resurgence. Despite some setbacks, including relegation in 2001, Eastbourne returned to form, achieving promotion in 2003. In 2007, the club secured the Sussex County League Championship and was promoted to the Isthmian League. This period was notable for the club's efforts to improve the Saffrons, culminating in FA Community Club status.

Despite a reprieve from relegation in 2010 and an 11th-place finish in 2013, the club couldn't avoid the drop in 2014, returning to the County League. However, Eastbourne Town remained competitive, finishing fourth in 2014-2015 and winning the Sussex RUR Charity Cup for the sixth time. More recent years saw steady improvement in the Sussex County League, including a strong

performance in the 2019 Sussex Senior Cup, where they reached the quarter-finals before losing to Brighton & Hove Albion's under-23 team.

In 2022, a change of management saw John Lambert step down after eight successful years, with Jude Macdonald, former manager of Whitehawk, taking over. Under Macdonald's guidance, Eastbourne Town finished second in the 2023-24 season, securing a place in the first-ever Southern Combination League play-offs. Victories over Hassocks in the semi-final and Newhaven in the final saw Eastbourne Town promoted back to the Isthmian League after a 10-year absence, marking a triumphant return to higher-level football for the club.