

#HERGAMETOO

In our penultimate programme notes for 2023, we welcome Helen Richardson who tells us about Hartlepool St Francis Women's FC.

"Alongside myself as team manager and coach, we have Antony Moran and Janice Weatherley as fellow coaches of the women's team at HSF.

The squad train on a Thursday evening 7-8pm currently at English Martyrs on the all-weather pitch during the winter period. In the summer we train 6pm-8pm at St Francis. This season we are playing in the Durham County FA Ladies Development League

and are currently third in the table. We are a newly established team that was set up earlier this year. We were welcomed with open arms when we met up with the club to get the ladies section in place and it was obvious to both the women and the club that we had the same goal, to get this ladies team on the map. Our joint vision is to promote ladies football within the club and bring the girls section back, which we have done now. The club are looking at us to spearhead the ladies and girls sections and we continue to promote and do this as the season goes on. We have a

range of ladies who play for the club, of all abilities and ages. The team is more like a family now and everyone chips in bringing their own experiences, from media to coaching to fundraising. Our progress has been made on and off the pitch and we try to make a welcoming and friendly environment to play football and enjoyment is the key to our success. We win together and lose together and enjoy every minute as we learn and move on and doing it together. We thrive on working towards the upcoming matches. I got into managing as I



thought it was the right time. I hung up my boots a few years ago having played for several teams including Sunderland Women, Sedgfield and Durham Women. I attended the national woman's football academy at East Durham College at Houghall Campus when it first got set up and I coached for a couple of seasons at Spennymoor Ladies. Therefore, I'm able to bring experiences and my passion for the game, from both playing and coaching to the ladies team.

The progress to the ladies football has been immense the last year or two. It's so nice to see that the women's game is now on the up and being recognised more and more. Women and girls can play too and to see more matches being televised is absolutely amazing.

Her Game Too, wow, where do I start?! What these volunteers do for the ladies game is immense. Having them promote the game so young girls can be inspired and have the support for inclusion and a voice, is nothing but sheer greatness. I only wish they were around when I was playing, to get it recognised as much as it is now. I as a manager will support Her Game too as much as I can to give young girls the

opportunity to thrive in girls/ladies game and I strongly believe the ladies of Hartlepool St Francis FC will do the same."

Our thanks to Helen for telling us about Hartlepool St Francis.

Any women or girls interested in playing can get in touch with us and we can pass on your details to Helen.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2024. We can't do our work with the support of Hartlepool United and our partners so many thanks to them all.

The new year will bring an exciting announcement that will showcase all the females in football within Hartlepool. As well as planning more events with Durham County FA as part of their Inclusion Advisory Board.

