

## RAMBLINGS REPORTS 2018-19

updated on 17/10/18

**R No.12: WebEd** - Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2018; **Howden AFC** (v Blackburn Athletic); Humber Premier League Division One; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Howden School & TC; Derwent Road; Howden; East Yorkshire; DN14 7AL; Result: 3-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 9

After making a long trip down into deepest Lincolnshire last week for my footy fix, I didn't really fancy venturing out too far from home today. My visit to Howden, just a few miles down the M62, fitted the bill perfectly with the journey time to the ground at Howden School & Technology College taking about thirty minutes from the BOTH. This was actually my second visit to the school site, having driven here last winter during a spell of poor weather. It was on a very wet day in early February that I arrived to find the field was in a terrible state and virtually waterlogged. Although the players were out warming up (on the sides of the pitch), I immediately feared the worst, fully expecting the referee to call it off when he (or she) got there. Rather than hang around to find out, I quickly got back into the car, did a hasty U-turn and headed back towards Hull. Coming off the A63 at the Melton turn, I got to the South Hunsley School just in time to watch South Cave United beat Chalk Lane 3-2 in a HPL Premier game on the well-appointed 4G pitch. I discovered later in the evening that the game at Howden had incredibly gone ahead with the home side losing 3-0 to Easington United. Sod's Law if you pardon the pun!

Thankfully, there were no such problems for me today. Even though there was quite a strong breeze, big enough to buffet the car a few times *en-route*, it was a beautiful and unseasonably warm, sunny afternoon in East Yorkshire. To get there you need to come off the M62 at junction 37, following road signs to Howden. Go straight across the roundabout next to the disused Renault/Nissan garage and at the next roundabout take a sharp left at the first exit towards Howden. After about 250 yards you will see a sign for the school and Derwent Road is on your right. Follow this road before turning right into the school car park.

For many years Howden Amateurs were the town's only established football club having enjoyed considerable success in the East Riding County League and cup competitions. In 1995, following a 6-week taster session a new team was formed to provide opportunities for the youngsters to become involved on a regular basis. The team called themselves Howden Juniors and they joined The Hull Boys' Sunday League at Under 10 level and continued to develop until reaching Under 18 level. During this time new teams joined each year, with some teams entering the newly formed Selby & District Junior League. After playing at Under 18 level for two years the team decided to form a new adult side. The club changed its name to Howden Town, and joined their senior neighbours in the East Riding County League. In 2010, the two clubs agreed to merge under the banner of Howden AFC,

and the seniors first team were elected into the Humber Premier League. The club continues to develop and support teams at mini soccer, youth and adult levels.

Once you've reached the school grounds it is not immediately clear where the main playing fields are situated. Luckily, after getting out of the car I spotted one of the players crossing a courtyard and disappearing behind some trees along the perimeter hedge. I quickly followed in his steps, passing a mini 3G pitch on my right, before entering a large playing field through a gap in the trees behind. As you would expect the venue is a rather basic one: apart from the main (un-roped) pitch which runs lengthways from the fence there are no pitch-side facilities in terms of dug-outs or spectator cover. However, for fellow snappers the aspect of the field with its beautiful backdrop of tall trees bordering the school more than makes up for this.

Although the sides had seemingly struggled to reach their best form to date, each occupying a lower mid-table position in the thirteen team First Division (second tier of the HPL) before play, today's game turned out to be an absolute cracker and one of the best I had seen so far this season. If ever there was a case of using an old cliché then this was it - the match was definitely one of two halves. With visitors Blackburn Athletic looking impressive in the first-half and taking a comfortable two goal lead shortly after the break, it looked as though they were heading back home to Brough with all three points. But how wrong can you be?

Mid-way through the half tricky forward Robbie Tomlinson latched on to a neat through pass and calmly slid the ball under the keeper to pull one back and get his team a foothold in the game. It was now the hosts who looked the better side and patience paid off when the young striker fired home his second, an equaliser, with only ten minutes left on the clock. With less than five minutes of normal play left the next goal was key. Incredibly it was Howden who struck once more when substitute Ieuan Clement broke through the Athletic defence to score the all-important winner and seal what was a terrific come back fully deserving a memorable 3-2 victory. Understandably there was a massive cheer all-round amongst the home players and fans when the whistle was blown to signal full-time. There was no doubt that both teams had contributed to what was a wonderful spectacle played in blustery conditions on an excellent playing surface. It was also a great advert for the league. Praise must go to referee Kevin Pick who was magnificent throughout: being firm and fair he carried out his duties professionally explaining his decisions throughout the game. Before play started he gathered each team around him (separately) and outlined his expectations to all the players. He also had time to remove a few stray branches which had fallen during the stiff breeze from the trees onto the pitch. Top notch stuff!

Needless to say, I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to the Howden School & Technology College. Although facilities are basic and there are no refreshments and programmes on hand, hoppers will certainly receive a lovely warm welcome when they get here. A visit to Howden AFC is thoroughly recommended. More information is available through the club website and via the regularly updated *twitter* account or by logging on to the excellent league website at *Full-Time* which provides a

really useful club information download. I hope you get lucky on your travels like I did today!

**R No.11: WebEd - Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018; Rippingale & Folkingham** (v Louth Town); Lincolnshire Junior Cup Round One; Kick-Off: 2.15pm; Venue: Folkingham PF; Walcot Lane; Folkingham; Lincs; NG34 OTP; Result: 1-3; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 8

After staying with my sister-in-law Jane down in Racing HQ for a few days, it was time to head back to Yorkshire. My chosen game today (a Lincs Junior Cup tie) contested at the Folkingham playing field provided the ideal venue being about half-way on my journey home. With horrendous on-going road works staggered over several sections of the A14 I decided to take a more scenic but slightly longer detour via Ely, March and Peterborough before reaching the village of Folkingham, arriving comfortably ahead of the kick-off.

A quick scroll through the club website highlights that football in the area grew from Rippingale Rovers JFC which was originally formed back in 1997, when present chairman Pete Stanton started coaching local children in the village on Sunday afternoons. In the early days the club progressed through the Peterborough League (from Under 9 's) and the Grantham League (Under 11's). The 1998-99 season saw a boom in local football with the local villages of Folkingham and Pointon forming their own clubs, Folkingham Falcons and Pointon JFC respectively. By November 2008 the club became a registered charity with the purpose of promoting community participation and by 2015 were honoured by the Lincs County FA with their award of Charter Standard Club of the Year.

Four years ago, with funding from the residents of Folkingham village and the *Football Foundation*, Rippingale moved to brand new changing facilities at Folkingham playing field becoming Rippingale & Folkingham Football Club. The participation levels are encouraging with teams represented in the Peterborough Football League, The Peterborough Youth League, The Peterborough Junior Alliance League and the Grantham Sunday League. Although pitches at Rippingale (the neighbouring village is just a few miles back down the A15) are too small for adult football, junior sides still play there. Those of you attending the early season P&DL Hop will remember that the club featured when they were the visitors at Whaplode Drove FC (great name isn't it?), an occasion fondly remembered by everyone here.

The ground is a veritable football outpost found in open countryside. It's based off Walcot Lane which is a mile or so from the main high street. A steep ramp leads up to the main entrance and tiny car park with much needed extra space on the grass behind the children's play area along one side of the tree-lined site. The well-appointed new brick-built pavilion is found just inside the entrance - a smart club logo designed with a purple background (the club colours) is proudly displayed on the outer wall. There are separate changing rooms for both players and officials, toilets at one end and a tea bar at the other. Adjacent, a small portacabin-cum-shed provides a storage space for the groundsman's equipment and training

accessories. The (un-roped) pitch which rises quite dramatically from both ends to form a plateau near the centre circle, is only a short walk from here. Positioned in the left-hand corner of the field, trees run close to the touchline on the far side with an allotment bordering the opposite (near) side - unusually this is separated from the field of play by a flimsy wire fence so you can get a good view of some interesting bird-scarers, various bags of compost and next year's perishables. A glimpse over the hedge behind the far goal-line reveals how far out in the sticks you are with gently rolling land disappearing into the distance. Being a council-owned rec there are no dug-outs or pitch-side cover on site at present.

Today's match featured opponents from different leagues, something which over the years I have really come to enjoy. The hosts from the Peterborough & District League Division Two (currently in second place out of thirteen) were taking on Louth Town (one place off the bottom of the Lincolnshire League) so an intriguing tie was in prospect. Despite the constant rain which had continued to fall since mid-morning the pitch held up well and didn't detract from what was a tough physical game played at a high tempo for the most part. For the record, the visitors booked their place in the next round after earning a 3-1 victory in a tight fought encounter. After going 2-0 down the hosts briefly got themselves back in the game with a goal mid-way through the second half only for Louth to net a third late on to put the result beyond doubt.

A brief mention must go to referee James Marden an ardent Sheffield United fan who had a cracking game. He must have gone home happy when he learned that his beloved Blades had just won 1-0 to send his team to the top of the Championship. Being a Tigers fan, I won't go into any more details about the game! During the afternoon I noted almost ten spectators in attendance (it didn't take long to spot them!), some of whom had made the hour or so trip from Louth to get here (in fact you could travel anywhere in the county if you get drawn away: some clubs like Swineshead Institute FC (Boston League) were heading up to Scunthorpe to play Barnetby United - a round trip lasting well over three hours!). Also pitch side was an affable Lincs FA committee member who along with couple of fans discussed the merits of the football pyramid in the county during the game. Hot drinks are available during the afternoon served from the tea bar by the lovely secretary Yvonne and her cheery helpers. If you want something more substantial to eat before the match a mobile fish and chip van parks up in the village at midday and was doing a brisk trade when I came past it earlier in the afternoon.

Just a quick word about Louth Town FC. In case you didn't know, the club, former members of the NCEL, has relocated to the Saltfleetby Sports Ground at Marshlands in the neighbouring village of Saltfleetby (some eight miles away) having lost their old ground at Park Avenue. A fire destroyed the beautiful old two-tier club house and other adjacent buildings. With the landlord blocking their access and any hope of a return, I was told that the land has already being earmarked by property developers and is to be used for building new houses.

During my short stay I found everyone here to be most friendly and welcoming. It goes without saying that a visit to the club based deep in the Lincolnshire

countryside comes heartily recommended. More details can be found on the *FA Full-Time* generic site covering the P&DL league as well as the club's own website and *Facebook* pages. The joys of watching county cup football continues. Have fun wherever you go!

**R No. 10: WebEd** - Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2018; **Horncastle Town** (v Lincoln Moorlands Railway); Lincolnshire Football League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: The Wong; Boston Road; Horncastle; Lincs; LN9 6EB; Result: 1-4; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 70

This was my second attempt to visit the club. Last season we were turned away from joining the main A15 slip road leading towards the Humber Bridge by an enforced police road block following an accident over the crossing. At the time we were told that the hold-up would last approximately four hours so rightly decided to give it a miss! We eventually headed up to watch Scarborough Athletic instead where a cracking top of the table match took place at the Flamingo Land Stadium (23/02/18 v Bamber Bridge, 2-3, (NPL1N), attendance: 1123). Today, a set of road works on the main roundabout junction after leaving the bridge tried its best to scupper my plans. Thankfully I had set off earlier than usual so that the diversion put in place (leading to a ten-mile detour around the outskirts of Immingham) meant I got to the club thirty minutes later than expected. Phew!!

Horncastle is a market town situated some seventeen miles east of the county town of Lincoln. Horncastle sits at the crossroads of two of Lincolnshire's major roads: the A158 runs west to east, joining Lincoln with the resort of Skegness on the Lincolnshire coast; the A153 joins Louth in the north with Sleaford and Grantham in the south. These two roads meet at the "Bull Ring" in the centre of Horncastle causing massive traffic problems during the holiday season. The town was granted its market charter by the Crown in the 13th century. It was long known for its great August horse fair, an internationally famous annual trading event which continued to be held until the mid-20th century. It ended after the Second World War, when horses were generally no longer used for agriculture. The town is now known as a centre for the antiques trade.

Horncastle Town FC plays its games at the wonderfully entitled ground called: The Wong. It's found just off the main high street with the well-appointed facilities catering for both local rugby and hockey teams as well as football all share the terrific site. It really is a true sporting oasis within the town. A handily placed car park (council-owned) is located directly behind the pitch and although it's free to stay there you do require a ticket to use it. I was told by a community police officer who just happened to park up next to me that the fine for ignoring this would be £80 - that's an expensive visit, so beware!

The ground has to be one of the best in the Lincolnshire League. Surrounded by local housing and the other sports facilities in the complex, it is self-contained. A smart club house building with function room and bar at one end and changing rooms at the other neatly sits along the far side. A couple of smart club emblems (printed in red, black and white - the club colours) depicting a football inside a

horn (what else?) are attached to the outer walls of the pavilion. There is open grass standing along the opposite side and the areas behind both goals are so close to local housing that some netting is used (well at one end, at least) to catch any stray shots. The playing area which is immaculate is enclosed by a neat post and rail fence (with advertising boards displayed around its perimeter) on both sides and by *FA Respect* tape/rope at each end. A couple of dug-outs positioned next to the half-way and slightly sunk into the ground are also neatly finished off in the club colours and labelled home and away respectively. To finish things off the ground has floodlights (six free-standing pylons, three along each side) which are fully functioning and used for evening matches. Knowing this beforehand, I wasn't sure at first whether to come here for an evening game but then decided it would be better to take photos during daylight. A good decision as one of the local photographers who also attended the game told me that the lights are poor and not really conducive to taking decent pictures. On a slightly negative note I was surprised by the lack of any real spectator cover here (other than a small veranda/overhang adjoining the pavilion).

Before play both sides occupied a mid-table position. Although the hosts had played two games more it was Moorlands who were two points better off. The game went according to the form book with visitors winning comfortably by a 4-1 score-line. The result seemed a bit flattering when mid-way through the second half Horncastle pulled one back to make it 2-1 before conceding two sloppy goals in quick succession soon after. There was no doubt that the visitors deserved to win and should be at the right end of the table come the end of the season. The match played in lovely, warm sunny conditions was attended by some seventy spectators. I was told that the crowd here was less than normal today as local Football League side Lincoln City FC were playing at home. Although the club doesn't issue programmes, hot and cold refreshments are available during the game served from a tea bar/hatch at the side of the pavilion.

Horncastle Town FC is an extremely pro-active club with plenty of up to date information for travellers published on its website and via social media through a dedicated *Facebook* page *twitter* account. A visit to this fine club close in the Lincolnshire Wolds come highly recommended. I hope you have less trouble getting there than I did. Enjoy your travels.

**R No.09: WebEd** - Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2018; **Barnetby United** (v Sherpa); Scunthorpe & District League Sporting Shield 2018-19 Round One; Kick-Off: 2.30pm; Venue: Silver Street; Barnetby-le-Wold; Lincs; DN38 6HR; Result: 5-2; Admission: Free; Programme: £1, 4pp; Attendance: 8

About eighteen months ago Keith Aslan, one of *FGIF's* finest scribes and paper-chasing obsessives posted details of a visit up to the wilds of north Lincolnshire for his footy fix. Incredibly our hopping supremo had travelled by train all the way from his Kent Dacha to the tiny and remote outpost of Barnetby-le-Wold (located only a few miles from the Humber Bridge crossing) to watch local side Barnetby United Football Club take on Brumby in a Scunthorpe & District League EC Surfacing Shield Semi-Final.

I don't know about you but as far as hopping trips go this was surely pushing the limits. Even for the most seasoned (pardon the pun) and compulsive of ground collectors, the thought of a four-and-a-half-hour train ride with the intention of watching a game in the lower reaches of the football pyramid really does seem more akin to an endurance test. But reading between the lines (again, no pun intended) this hop was certainly up there amongst the very best of them: Keith enthused about what was a truly memorable visit calling it 'a pleasure seeker's paradise!' He goes on to explain in the opening paragraph of his report that the village train station (connecting from Doncaster) is ideally placed. It's not only a stone's throw from the ground but situated right next to a local pub! After a quick pint, you also pass by a *One-Stop* convenience store and a chippy called *ASalt and Battery* (what a great name) on your way to the Silver Street rec. But as you read on it soon becomes clear why Keith had (amongst other things) chosen to tick off this cracking little club in the Lincolnshire Fens when he reveals that United also issues programmes and badges - the real carrot on the stick for his trip. What stands out too is the lovely warm welcome Keith receives during his short visit.

Today I'm making the trip to visit Barnetby United FC myself. Before setting out at mid-day I contact mega-helpful club secretary Lee Fielden to confirm the all-important match details. In fact, he receives my call whilst refereeing an under-nine's match but true to his word rings back to chat at full-time. The (comparatively) much shorter journey from *FGIF* HQ takes only twenty minutes to get there and upon arrival it is Lee who greets with a beaming smile. Even though he's a busy guy (putting up the nets) he still has time to nip back into the club building (a lovely new facility with the club name proudly displayed above the door) for my much coveted and valued matchday programme and club badge which he has put by for me. It's true to say isn't it that football clubs do rely on the good-will, hard work and commitment of the few unpaid volunteers who give up their valuable time for the good of their local club. Indeed, Lee is Mr Barnetby United FC, a statement which Keith heartily endorses. Having played for the team since 1993 (under 16's), he went on to become manager in 2001 at the tender age of 22. Apart from his role as club secretary, Lee also performs important duties including treasurer, groundsman, programme editor and referee.

Facilities here are basic but homely for the level of football on offer. A short driveway off Silver Street leads directly to the large playing which is surrounded by tall hedges backing onto open fields on three of its sides. To the right the village hall building is found adjacent to the main car park with a children's playground alongside. From here it is only a short walk over to the new changing pavilion and main un-rope pitch marked out on the far side of the field. A smaller mini-pitch runs at right angles. At present there are no dug outs or any spectator cover on site.

Today's match sees the visit of Sherpa (a pub side in Scunthorpe) to Silver Street for the first round of the Sporting Shield, one of the many cup competitions organised by the Scunthorpe & District League. A minute's silence is observed perfectly before kick-off in memory of former clubman Ron Boulton who died

recently at the aged of eighty-nine (his grandson is on the touch-line as a mark of respect). The match goes according to the form book with United, current leaders in Division One, beating their opponents (relegated last season into Division Two) by a 4-2 score-line. Although the result suggests an easy victory for the hosts they had to dig in a bit during the later stages as Sherpa got back into the game. The match played in mainly overcast conditions on a bumpy surface attracts only a handful of spectators.

As already mentioned above a programme (consisting of four pages) is issued for the game - with all you need to know its packed with information and is a perfect addition to any programme collection. Beautifully laid out in full colour each issue shows the club logo and pertinent match details on the front, a club welcome and manager's notes together with a full-round up of the previous week's matches and an updated league table inside and both playing squads on the back. I was drawn to the history column which lists the major honours since the club was formed back in 1936: incredibly they used to ply their trade in the now defunct Grimsby League and won the Division 3B title in 1946-47. Hoppers should take note that Lee prints only ten copies for each home game and admits these days it doesn't take too long to compile. Now that's modesty for you!!

As far as hopping goes this was one of my favourite footy trips since relocating up to the Banks of the Humber and a big thanks once again go to Keith and Lee for making this such a memorable day out. It goes without saying Barnetby United is a lovely club and a visit here comes highly recommended - you will definitely receive a warm welcome and more besides when you take in a game at this wonderful football outpost. The joys of watching grass-roots soccer continues. Have fun wherever you go.

**R No.08: WebEd** - Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2018; **Scotter United** (v Limestone Rangers); Scunthorpe & District League Division One; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: Northmoor Park; Northmoor Road; Scotter; Lincs; DN21 3HE; Result: 4-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 29

My footy fix today gave me the chance to visit not only a new ground but also take in a game from another new league. Leaving home later than normal ahead of the 3pm kick-off my eagerly awaited hop was only a short trip over the River Humber towards the outskirts of Scunthorpe. My destination today was the village of Scotter (about five miles from Scunthorpe town centre) where the local club were entertaining Limestone Rangers in a Scunthorpe & District League Division One (top division) fixture. After following the main A159 Gainsborough Road into the village (from Beggar Hill) turn a sharp right (at the roundabout) into North Moor Road and continue for about half-a-mile until the main entrance of Northmoor Park comes into view on the crown of a bend (on the left). A small unmade car park joins part



of the large playing field which is bordered by fields and open countryside on three of its sides: indeed, the low-lying aspect of the site means you can see into the distance for miles with wind-turbines and pylons dotted along the horizon. There's also evidence of a new housing development in the village judging by the number of local new builds in the vicinity.

Upon arrival I was directed by one of the committee members to park on the grass in the adjacent section of the field where a set of training lights (and tall pylon) straddle the hedge running parallel with the roadside. To the left and just inside the entrance stands a neat metal signpost where the club name and logo are printed in white paint on a royal blue background. The changing rooms and toilets are located in a series of green coloured outbuildings on this side of the field. A short walk leads you to the one and only main (un-roped) pitch which is marked on the nearside of the playing field (perpendicular to the Northmoor Road). With neither a sub's bench/dug-outs nor spectator cover at pitch-side this can be described as a very basic venue to say the least. In view of this, I would encourage any travellers to come here in better weather.

Although they did play in a cup game (v Epworth Town Colts Blues, 7-1) last weekend, this was in fact the hosts first league game of the new season. For those of you who take some stock in league tables at such an early stage of the campaign the visitors from Willoughton arrived in good form having already beaten the Butchers Arms (4-1) seven days ago, a result which (after one game) earned them a top spot. Today's match suggested that a few goals could be pencilled on the scoresheet come full-time but it would be difficult to pick a winner if truth be told.

For the record it was the hosts who prevailed, winning by a rather flattering 4-2 score-line. In what was a rather an unpredictable game, Scotter took control of proceeding in the first-half and were cruising, going 3-0 up by the break. They added another early in the second half to make it 4-0 before introducing five subs (yes, that's *five* subs - league rules allow this) into the game leading to a total loss of shape and rhythm. At this point Rangers took advantage and soon got back into the match. It was no surprise when they replied scoring two late goals. But sadly, it was too little, too late. The result now sees United leapfrog their opponents moving into second place behind Barnetby United who head the rankings with back to back wins giving them a 100% record.

The match played on a decent well-grassed surface in very muggy conditions marked by a combination of heavy showers, threatening skies and a short glimpse of sunshine attracted almost thirty spectators. There were no refreshments or programmes on offer. However, I was told during the game by former United manager that Barnetby United FC have issued regularly for home games in the S&DL in recent seasons. He also mentioned that current Hull City boss Nigel Adkins used to live in the village whilst he was working with Scunthorpe United FC (2006-2010). And finally, before writing off I would like to express thanks to Colin Picken (groundhopper and former United coach) for his kind help in confirming the match details and club directions when I contacted him on Friday evening - in fact his

number (no name) was the only one listed under the *FA Full-Time* 'Find A Club' section.

A visit to Scotter United FC comes highly recommended. There's no doubt hoppers will receive a warm welcome from everyone connected with this lovely little club in North Lincolnshire border.

*edited on 18/09/18*

**R No.07: WebEd** - Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2018; **Sherburn White Rose** (v Beeston St Anthony); West Yorkshire League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2.30pm; Venue: Finkle Hill Recreation Ground; Finkle Hill; Sherburn-in-Elmet; LS25 6EL; Result: 2-4; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 60

My chosen game today from the West Yorkshire League, was a totally new hopping experience. In all my footy adventures over the years this was one league where I had never gone to watch a game before. So, it was with eager anticipation that I set out to watch Sherburn White Rose FC take on Beeston St Anthony in a Premier Division fixture. The club is based in the village of Sherburn-in-Elmet (which is actually in North Yorkshire) and is easily reached from the A1 intersection at Ferrybridge. In all, my journey from *FGIF* HQ took about an hour to get here.

The ground is found on the main approach road off Finkle Hill and is about half a mile from the town centre. As you come off the roundabout exit, the main entrance on the left is quite narrow and is not immediately easy to spot: as the entrance sign is set back from the road, look out for a tall beacon which stands out more prominently behind it. A large car park leads to the impressive club buildings (funded by a rather generous Football Foundation grant awarded in 2003) on the left which comprise a lovely bar lounge, function room, changing rooms, toilets and small kitchen which doubles as a tea bar (access is outside). A wooden veranda complete with smart gallery rail adjoins the pavilion continuing as far as the changing rooms where a set of steps leads down to the pitch below. A series of mini Union Jacks and large Yorkshire flag can also be seen proudly on display here.

The ground has quite an enclosed feel as it is bordered by trees and bracken on three of its sides. The pitch which has one of the most pronounced side to side slopes (going down to the far touchline) in non-league football (comparable to the old Huish) is bordered by a white painted metal perimeter fence. Two brick dug outs are positioned either side of the half-way line to the left and are so close to the trees behind that access along here is restricted. Some children's play equipment and a range of picnic tables and metal seats are arranged along the opposite side nearer to the pavilion. The club are lucky enough to have floodlights which I was told by one of the committee members are used not only for training purposes but also for evening games at the beginning and end of the season.

Today's game played in torrential rain throughout was a fabulous advert for the league and in terms of commitment was one of the best matches I have seen in a long time. The final result rested ultimately on three penalty decisions. Beeston took the lead twice only for Sherburn to equalise each time. With the score

standing at 1-2 the ball was in the Beeston penalty area when it struck a defender's hand. Although the referee initially awarded a penalty for hand ball he changed his mind after the intervention of the linesman (who was nearer to the incident). He convinced the referee that there was no intent involved and it was more a ball-to-hand situation. After a short period of deliberation, the referee duly changed his mind (which didn't go down well with the home management and fans) and re-started play with a drop ball. Both penalties awarded to Beeston (in the second half) were converted. Although they were also hotly contested I felt the referee got in right on both decisions. As a result (pardon the pun) it knocked the stuffing out of the hosts who feeling hard done by couldn't get back into the game which ended 2-4. On balance of play Beeston deserved to win, a result which elevates them to the top of the table. Despite the heavy rain which didn't ease up once, the pitch held up remarkably well. After a couple of *sortees* around the pitch (dodging beneath the overhanging branches at regular intervals) taking a very damp camera with me for company, I headed back to the club buildings where along with the vast majority here, spent most of the game sheltered under the much drier confines of the veranda (a real godsend) behind the goal. It's also a cracking elevated position from which to view of the action.

Although the club doesn't issue programmes (I'm not sure whether any of the clubs in this league do yet), refreshments were dispensed by three cheerful ladies from behind the tea bar. For just £2 I enjoyed a cracking chip butty (with the biggest chips you've ever seen) and a cup of tea to wash it all down with.

In summary, it had been a great afternoon. It goes without saying that Sherburn White Rose FC is a friendly, well-run club and should definitely be on every 'hoppers to-do list. I will certainly visit more grounds in this competition during the coming season. For more details check out the generic *FA Full-time* site updated by the WYFL and the member club *twitter* feeds of which there are an ever-growing number. The joys of watching West Yorkshire League football in North Yorkshire outposts are to be recommended.

*edited on 11/09/18*

**R No.06: WebEd** - Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018; **Crowle Colts** (v Sutton Rovers); Central Midlands League Division One North; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: Windsor Park, Godnow Road, Crowle, DN17 4EE; Result: 2-1; Admission: Free; Programme: £1, 12pp; Attendance: 48

According to my little blue *FGIF* Hopping Stats record book it was almost five years ago since I last watched a game in the Central Midlands League. It was on 20/11/13 that I travelled up the A1 towards Grantham for a game featuring the (then) new boys Barrowby FC (remember them?) who were playing against Linby Colliery Welfare in a South Division fixture. The faded pages in my book reveal that the game ended 1-1 in front of 32 spectators. I can also recall from looking at the album photos that the game was played in beautiful late autumn weather. I remember leaving my camera at home (doh!) and spending most of the second half

in the company of former trusty *FGIF* scribe Andy Gallon, a most affable guy, who like me was there to tick off the ground. Gosh how times flies?

With this in mind I thought it was high time to attend another game in this competition, one I must say appears to have a rather quick turnover of clubs within its ranks from one season to another. Mind you for fellow obsessives this can be quite a bonus if you are looking out for new grounds to add to your collection. With recent restructuring the CML has once again received a new influx of clubs who under a new format will contest honours in a revamped north-south split. I was particularly interested to check out the clubs in the new Division One North constitution: there are thirteen (possibly now twelve) teams taking part including at least four new clubs who appear to have either a separate identity or play on their own ground (ie- not classed as a Reserve/Development side). The 'do-able' ones (as I like to call them) are: Crowle Colts FC; Epworth Colts FC; Nottingham FC and Sutton Rovers FC.

So, you can imagine my sheer delight when, a couple of weeks back, hopping superno and *FGIF*'s most erudite and popular reporter Keith Aslan sent in another one of his cracking, 'must read' reviews; this time recording a most favourable hop to watch Crowle Colts FC in their first ever home game in the CML (v Welbeck Lion's Reserves) which was a huge success. The Colts came away with a 5-2 victory and record crowd in attendance (100+). So, prompted by Keith's enthusiasm and positivity, I wanted to see the place for myself and duly added this to my 'very short' list of grounds to get done sooner rather than later.

From *FGIF* HQ on the Banks of the Humber, a trip to Crowle (on the south side of the river) can easily be reached by taking the M62 west and turning off at Goole and then on to Thorne, or by crossing the bridge and heading towards the outskirts of Scunthorpe on the M180. By chance, both journeys are about the same distance and take roughly the same amount of time to get there (in the region of 50 minutes). I chose the first option and arrived at the village well ahead of kick-off. It was a stress-free trip apart from the last few miles which involved expert concentration whilst driving along very narrow and bumpy fenland roads around Jaques Bank skirting the Stainforth and Keadby Canal. If you go this way belt up tight!

Windsor Park, about half-a-mile from the town centre, is found off Godnow Road. Facilities here are rather basic at present: the main car park fronts a large open playing field which is bordered by further open fields and countryside around it. The site is dominated by a series of very tall electricity pylons which convey power through cables passing overhead and into the distance as far as the eye can see. A large, brick club building is located in the left-hand corner of the field beyond a children's skate park. The pavilion houses a large function room (in full use today for a children's party), changing rooms and toilets. A small lock-up shed to the right acts as a groundsman's store for pitch marking equipment and other accessories.

The main pitch is marked out in the centre of the playing field (about hundred yards from, and parallel, to the clubhouse) and is roped on all sides as per CML rules. Two blue coloured synthetic dug outs positioned on either side of the half-way line on the furthest touchline - I did notice at one point in the second-half that a gust of wind had blown one of these 'tents' into the air and required the help of several subs standing nearby to pull it back to the ground again. Apart from a wooden seat on the opposite side of the pitch, there are no other spectator comforts here.

Today saw a contest between the reigning champions of both the Scunthorpe & District League and the Doncaster Senior League titles. Ironically, both sides had already met just a few weeks ago in a pre-season friendly with Rovers coming out on top with a 4-2 victory, so a really exciting game (and maybe some revenge for the hosts!) was in prospect with both sides remaining unbeaten in the league before play. Stats showed that the Colts had two wins under their belt and newcomers Sutton Rovers FC (who incidentally groundshare with Askern Welfare FC), had won one and drawn the other of their first two games.

As expected this was a thoroughly absorbing contest with both sides creating plenty of chances throughout the match. The deadlock was broken on 37 minutes when Gav Cooper calmly headed the ball into the net from close range to give the Colts the lead. No sooner had play re-started when Rovers went back down the other end and equalised with tricky winger Ryan Walker (38) lobbing keeper Joe Maxfield from a tight angle to make it 1-1 going into the break. Colts soon regained the lead after half-time when Hashley Cranidge (52) nodded the ball home following a corner on the left. Another pulsating half brought more chances but with both keepers making some cracking saves the result ended with a hard-fought 2-1 victory to the hosts. The result sends them to joint top spot in the table.

The game played on a hard, bumpy surface in lovely warm sunny conditions attracted almost fifty spectators with several well-known hoppers in attendance including northern-based travellers Paul R (from Cheshire) and Len S (Manchester). Thanks to Len for providing me with the line-ups within seconds of the start of the game. After an appeal on *twitter* in the days leading up to the game, the Colts managed to coerce several volunteers into helping (wo)man a refreshment stand with a wide range of snacks and drinks on sale outside the changing rooms during the afternoon. Paper-chasers will also be pleased to learn that a terrific 12-page programme with stiff cover priced £1 was also available for the game. This contained everything you needed and came in varying shades of red which editor Gav explained was down to his print cartridge running low on ink. I smiled as Len S politely requested a 'puce' coloured cover before the match started!! Totally out of character I actually obtained four programmes for the match: two replacements were needed after the first two ended up getting soaked when my bottle of squash overturned in the car passenger seat. It was lucky I returned to grab a biro from the car when I did and double lucky the programmes hadn't all gone too at 2.55pm!

A visit to this north Lincolnshire outpost is a must for all ground collectors. It's a lovely club, run by a superb pro-active committee and I wish them well on their new journey. Details about Crowle Colts FC can be found on their regularly updated club *Pitchero* website (a report, photos and even video clips from this game have just been added) and *twitter* feeds as well as on the generic *FA Full-time* site updated by the CML. The joys of hopping on both sides of the Humber continue...

*edited on 10/09/18*

**R No.05: WebEd** - Monday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2018; **Tadcaster Albion** (v Morpeth Town); Northern Premier League Division One East; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: i2i Stadium, Ings Lane, Tadcaster, LS24 9AY; Result: 1-3; Admission: £8; Programme: £2, 44pp; Attendance: 243

The club is believed to have been formed in 1892 playing as John Smith's FC. It wasn't until 1923 some thirty years later that the Tadcaster Albion FC name was adopted with the side playing in the local York League. This lasted until the early 1970's when they joined the Yorkshire League reaching Division One in both 1975 and 1977. Five years later they became founder members of the NCEL playing firstly in Division Two North before joining the reorganised Division One in 1991 winning the title in 2009/10 and gaining promotion to the Premier Division, finishing fourth and winning the NCEL Vice Presidents Cup in their first season. In 2014/15 the Brewers led the Premier Division for most of the season but a poor run of games in March eventually led them to third place. An excellent run in the FA Vase saw the club make history by reaching the quarter-final of the competition where they were defeated by Highworth Town in a replay in front of a record-breaking crowd of 1307. The following season saw the club hold their nerve by winning the title beating Armthorpe Welfare 2-1 on the final day of the season. They also reached the League Cup Final but went down narrowly with a 3-2 defeat to Cleethorpes Town. The following season saw the Brewers play for the first time in the NPL North Division finishing 19<sup>th</sup> under the guidance of coach Billy Miller. With a further change in personnel Michael Morton and Simon Collins took over at the helm last season and helped the Brewers reach the *Evo-Stik* League play-offs but sadly they went down 2-1 to Bamber Bridge at the semi-final stage. For the 2018/19 season Tadcaster Albion FC finds itself in the newly restructured Northern Premier League East Division which sees the constitution changing from a north-south split to a new east-west divide. It's exciting times for the club.

In its early days the club played its home games on the site of the cricket ground in Station Road before moving to the Ings ground near to where the present Sam Smiths Brewery Packaging Block now stands. Changing facilities were in the town at the rear of the Falcon Public House on Chapel Street and it was a common Saturday afternoon sight to see nets, corner flags, buckets, oranges, players and locals trekking through the town. This continued until 1960 when the club moved 100 yards up river to its present home at the Park.

After finishing as runners-up in the Northern League Division One last season visitors Morpeth Town FC has gained promotion to the newly reorganised NPL East, their first time at Step 4. The Highwaymen (Vase holders in 2016) arrive at the i2i Stadium on the back of a cracking 1-0 FA Cup Preliminary round victory at home to Marske United at the weekend. With both sides sharing almost identical league records (one win, one defeat and similar goal difference to date) and with the Brewers also winning in the FAC (4-1 v Shildon) a close game is on the cards. However, it is the men from the north east who prevail coming out comfortable 3-0 winners (it could have been more) showing greater skill and pace all-round. Most of the home fans recognised this and agreed they certainly looked an impressive outfit.

The game played in mainly overcast conditions on one of the best kept non-league pitches I have seen in a long time, attracted 243 spectators. Although I will let the photos in the album describe the ground I found the facilities here to be excellent with plenty of cover and seating. I particularly liked the bijou Ken Gilbertson stand behind the goal at the far end. Travellers may be interested to know that much building work is being carried out at the moment alongside the stand behind the goal at the opposite end (and is at present cordoned off with some high wire mesh fencing panels). Although the strong smell of hops can be pervasive at times the close location of the brewery with its vast chimneys behind the stands make for a perfect backdrop to proceedings and acts a perfect reminder of the strong links between the town of Tadcaster and the brewing industry, if you ever needed one.

A terrific beautifully produced programme containing 44 full colour pages (mainly blue and yellow, the club colours) inside a glossy cover sold for £2. It is literally jam-packed with information and contains everything you ever want to know. Full marks to editor Olivia McKenna. A busy tea bar operating inside the club house stocks a wide range of hot food and drinks at reasonable prices. The hot meat and potato pie, mushy peas with gravy was certainly going down a treat with the punters.

It goes without saying that I really enjoyed my visit here. Everyone from the gate man, programme seller, tea-lady and tannoy-announcer to the fans pitch side were more than welcoming and I would definitely recommend a visit to this smashing little club to both football fans and travellers alike. Come on you Brewers!

*edited on 06/09/18*

**R No.04: WebEd - Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2018; Driffield Evening Institute (v North Cave United); Humber Premier League Division One; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Driffield School, Manorfield Road, Driffield, YO25 5HR; Result: 3-0; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 18**

I was starting to feel the effects of an excess of cycling miles in my legs this week (no doubt brought on by something related to my mid-life crisis) and thought it best not to travel too far from the Banks of the Humber for my footy fix. With Fran and Steph happy to come along for some retail therapy the town of Driffield (about 40 minutes-drive away) fitted the bill perfectly for us all.

Due to its proximity to Beverley (10 miles away), Bridlington and York the market town boasts the impressive title the *Capital of the Wolds*. Also known as Great Driffield, it is mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 as dirty (manured) field and is cited as being Anglo-Saxon in origin. The age-old tradition of *Scrambling* is unique to the town of Driffield and has its origins in the 18th century. The event takes place a couple of days into the New Year when children walk through the main street shouting an ancient rhyme to shopkeepers in return for money and goodies. I wonder if this happens at other times of the year with slightly different vocabulary and menaces thrown in!! It currently hosts one of the UK's largest annual one-day agricultural shows attracting large numbers of farmers and increased business to the town. And finally, to end on a note of trivia England first-class cricketer Jonny Bairstow used to play for the Driffield town cricket team, members of the ECB Yorkshire Premier League North.

Back to the football. The town is also home to two non-league Saturday football sides: Driffield Evening Institute FC and Driffield Junior FC both of whom ply their trade in the Humber Premier League First Division (or second tier of the competition). I chose to travel to the former as it was slightly nearer to the town centre where my nearest and dearest could enjoy a couple of hours browsing around the many shops before I picked them up afterwards. The club itself started playing football in the town during the early 1970's and joined the Humber Premier League from the Driffield & District League at the start of the 2011-12 season. Recent success saw promotion to the Premier Division at the beginning of 2014-15 but this didn't last long as the club was relegated back to Division One after only one season in the top flight.

Driffield EI play at the Driffield School and Sixth Form, the only large comprehensive school in the town and is found in a cul-de-sac at the end of Manorfield Road. Upon arrival the main pitch is not easy to spot as it is hidden behind all the school buildings on the left-hand side. By following the driveway keep left until you reach a small car park next to the PE block and changing rooms. The main playing area is marked on the field behind the large floodlit 3G (looking towards the main road). Access to the field is through a gate which takes you alongside the cage turning left once you reach the corner. The pitch itself (roped on the far side only) runs parallel to the main road where it is bordered by trees, hedges and gardens on the far side and the lower wall and fencing from the 3G cage on the nearside. A set of modern *perspex* dug outs are placed at opposite sides of the half-way line (the home one is on the far touch-line). A large out building and car park belonging to the local fire and rescue service dominates proceedings behind the goal to the left. As expected the main school buildings, fashioned from a light-coloured brick, form a large back drop to the action. All-in-all it seemed a rather soulless place to be.

The game itself saw the visit of North Cave United FC (newly promoted as runners-up from the East Riding County Senior League Premier Division at the end of last season) arrive at Manorfield Road for only their second game of the competition having drawn 3-3 at Brandesburton AFC a week ago. By contrast, this was the hosts



third game to be played in a week (and also third consecutive home match!) with a 3-1 victory over Easington and 2-1 defeat to Bridlington Town Reserves already recorded so far. So, on paper a fairly close game was in prospect. After a pretty even opening fifteen minutes it was Driffield EI who took control of the match and in the end ran out comfortable 3-0 winners against what appeared to be a struggling North Cave side depleted in numbers due to illness, injury and holiday (reasons given by their manager afterwards). In fairness the game was not a classic but was a welcome tick nevertheless. Played on a poor, hard, bumpy and littered surface, the game attracted almost twenty spectators.

Although I have seen a few games in this league now since relocating I have found that there is quite a marked difference in the standard of football between the two divisions of the HPL. Travellers interested in watching games in this competition can find match details on the *FA Full-Time* website and the various *twitter* accounts which are becoming very popular amongst an increasing number of clubs used to promote themselves and publish essential matchday information. The joys of hopping continue. Have fun wherever you go.

*Edited on 06/09/18*

**R No.03: WebEd** - Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2018; **Dunnington** (v Osbaldwick); York Football League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Common Road, Dunnington, York, YO19 5RY Result: 6-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 18

They say you sometimes need a bit of luck in your life, don't they? Well that's just what happened to me on my footy fix today - I got lucky but it could have been so different. Before setting off at midday the sun was shining brightly and weather forecast was good. There wasn't any major set of roadworks along the way to throw a spanner in the works and my trip up to the outskirts of York didn't seem to pose any real problems at all. Well things seemed set for a lovely afternoon, or so I thought before heading off.

In fact, apart from the last ten miles, I almost followed my tyre tracks from last Saturday (to Wigginton Grasshoppers FC) on my way to Dunnington this afternoon. The village is easy to find by turning off the A1079 (Pocklington to York road) before reaching the city ring road (which was a nightmare last week). After following Common Road for a mile or so, the ground which shares its facilities with the local cricket club soon appears on the right-hand side. Although a cricket match was in progress when I arrived I had no real concerns as I knew from memory that the football pitches are marked off in a separate area of the playing fields (with no overlap) further along the main road. Within two minutes, I pulled up next to the football ground, looking resplendent with its neat perimeter fencing. However, something didn't quite look right. Having got out of the car it soon became apparent that the pitch markings looked very faint and the goals were not yet in place. In fact, the site was deserted. By now it was 1.40pm, leaving only twenty minutes until kick-off. I decided to have a quick look around the corner to see if any other pitches were being used instead but found nothing.

I hastily grabbed my mobile phone off the passenger seat to see if I could contact anyone at the club - maybe they could give me some news about the game. Before dialling I noticed my phone screen was completely blank - perhaps it had turned itself off. To my horror the battery was dead no doubt having run out of charge somewhere *en-route*. Without an in-car charger (at home) and no one around to help I quickly realised I was stuck. Big time. I didn't have any way of looking up fixtures so couldn't come up with a Plan B. From memory (after checking other matches on line in the morning) I seemed to recall that maybe Thorpe United (same league) were also at home today. It was by now 1.50pm and definitely too late to head across to Riccall (the village where they play home games). The only other match I could think of from the top of my head was an NPL East game at Tadcaster Albion FC. I hurriedly tapped this address into the sat nav (this was still working!) and it gave me an estimated journey time of 25 minutes, (enough to get there before the 3pm start). So, Tadcaster it was then (or Plan C).

I quickly did a U-turn in the cricket club car park and set off again at speed back down Common Road towards the main carriageway and on to Taddy. After driving a couple of hundred yards something quite remarkable happened: as I slowed in busy traffic I suddenly caught a glimpse (out of the corner of my eye) of what I thought was a football being kicked high in the air appearing from over the top of an overgrown hedge at the side of the road. I also noticed, through the branches, the outline of some players warming up on a field to my immediate left. My mind raced - surely this couldn't be...? Not really knowing where I was going, I turned a sharp left into what was a minor road. By a quirk of fate, this led to a car park and some random adjoining playing field which suddenly opened up before me. Coming to a halt, the guy getting out of the car next to me could tell I was obviously a bit stressed and said reassuringly: 'If you're looking for Dunnington Football Club, you've found it. The team's playing Osbaldwick in a league game'. Unbelievable. By pure chance I had found the ground with five minutes to spare before the start!!! I hastily gathered my camera bag, *FGIF* stats card and pen and walked briskly to pitch-side ready for the action to commence. Phew indeed!

Now back to the game. Dunnington came into the match showing some recent good form having drawn the previous Saturday (2-2 at Thorpe United) and won convincingly at home in midweek (5-1 against Sporting Knavesmire) whereas visitors Osbaldwick had been beaten twice (3-1 at FC Racing on the opening day and 5-2 at Church Fenton on Tuesday evening). Similar to last Saturday this was another cracking game and a great advert for the league. Just when it looked like the hosts were going chalk up a high score taking a 3-0 lead into the break the visitors from York managed to pull the score back to 3-2 on the hour mark. This sparked Dunnington back into life again and by full-time they had added another three goals to their tally eventually running out 6-2 winners, a result that sent them to the top of the table. The game played on a dry bumpy pitch attracted nearly twenty spectators.

Facilities here (all along the Common Road side of the field) are basic but adequate and include proper changing rooms (in portacabins) in the left-hand

corner next to the club welcome sign and two semi-built brick dug outs positioned close to the half-way line. There is also another pitch that runs parallel to the right. So where does all the ground confusion lie? It appears that the football club use this field regularly for reserve matches and by the first team but only during the cricket season (when both sports clash on the calendar). I was reliably informed that this in fact has nothing to do with pitches overlapping (they don't) but because the car park at the main ground isn't big enough for all the cars to park in it when both sports are played at the same time on match day.

Well my season is only three weeks old and it seems I've already lost the plot. Maybe I'm a risk taker or maybe I'm getting on a bit in years (after all I will be sixty in three weeks' time). Or maybe I've been doing this for too long- who knows? You'd have thought that with over thirty-five years of hopping experience under my anorak I would have sussed it all out by now! Well the short answer to that is obviously a resounding No! Maybe next time I'll double check where I'm going, charge my phone properly, bring the in-car charger, check the fuel level on the dashboard etc. One thing for sure is that it pays to plan properly before leaving home! On the plus side I can always come back on another day and tick off the proper ground. Ah, the joys of hopping continue. Be lucky wherever you go.

*Edited on 05/09/18*

**R No.02: WebEd** - Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2018; **Wigginton Grasshoppers** (v Dringhouses); York Football League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Wigginton Mill Lane, Wigginton, York, YO32 2PY Result: 1-3; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 52

With the new football season, literally, a few days old I was pleasantly surprised to see that fixtures for the York Football League had already been published. In fact, matches in the top division started today. Having taken in games at both Old Malton St Marys FC and Huntington Rovers FC towards the back end of last season, my first taste of football in the competition, I was suitably impressed by the standard on offer and was keen to visit a few more grounds in this league in the future. With this in mind it didn't take long to pick a game from those listed and my chosen footy fix today was a trip to watch Wigginton Grasshoppers FC, an exciting prospect as the club are the current champions having won the Premier Division title last season.

Wigginton village is based about four miles towards the north of the city and is accessed from Pocklington (the A1079) by taking an anti-clockwise route along the main A64 York ring road. I'm glad that I set off reasonably early today as a five-mile tail back of slow moving holiday-bound traffic heading north led to a good thirty-minute hold-up before moving on smoothly again for the last section of the journey nearer to Haxby. Luckily, I arrived with enough time ahead of the 2pm kick-off for a league game against today's opponents Dringhouses or *Dringy* as they are affectionately referred to by the locals!

The club formed back in 1982 is found off Wigginton Mill Lane where the main entrance is clearly marked *Sports Centre and Playing Field*. A short driveway leads

to a large car park and impressive brick-building incorporating the squash, racketball and social clubs. There is further parking beyond the football changing rooms alongside the local bowls club. Don't worry if you can't see the playing area immediately as it is hidden from view and marked out in a field to the right at the end of the driveway. There are two (even three) pitches on the tree-lined site. Unusually two sets of dug outs, fashioned out of breeze blocks are positioned back to back next to the half-way so that there are two sets facing each adjacent playing area. Confused? Look at the album for assistance. To the right and behind the goal on the furthest pitch is a set of portacabins (arranged in tandem) each separately used to cater for refreshments, changing rooms for players and officials and one for toilets (thankfully the only facility in use today). Three prominent poles each with flags flying at full mast are on display (they show a Union-Jack, Yorkshire rose and a club flag sporting the crest of a grasshopper (with the words *Success Through Endeavour* printed on it).

In fact, it doesn't take you long to recognise who plays here - I noticed (even before kick-off) the club emblem clearly appearing on no fewer than half a dozen locations around the site (on the wall of the club house; on a pennant hanging on the outer wall of the changing rooms; on a welcome sign at the end of the driveway; on the end of the dug outs; on a noticeboard between the dug outs; on the side of the refreshment cabin and on the flag itself). Now if I've missed any please let me know!! Although there is no spectator cover here the pitch itself (furthest one used) was completely roped off on all sides.

The game (officiated by an appointed referee and his two linesmen) was a terrific advert for the league. After equalising just after the interval, the hosts seemed to run out of steam and fell behind to two further strikes late on giving the visitors an unexpected but well-earned 3-1 victory. The match played on a hard, bumpy straw-coloured surface in sunny conditions attracted over fifty spectators many of whom had travelled the short distance across the city from Dringgy. Although there is a building marked 'refreshments' situated behind the goal here, it wasn't open during the match and gave the impression that it hasn't been used for some time.

A visit to Wigginton Grasshoppers FC is recommended to all travellers. The York Football League (established as long ago as 1897) publishes a fabulous website packed with regularly updated information covering all the clubs, league and cup fixtures and results in its seven different divisions featuring over 200 clubs. You'll certainly be impressed - click here for more: <https://www.yorkleague.org.uk/>

*edited on 05/09/18*

**R No.01: WebEd** - Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2018; **Parkgate** v Nostell MW; Northern Counties East League Division One; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: Roundwood Sports Complex, Green Lane, Rawmarsh, Rotherham, S62 6LA; Result: 0-3; Admission: £3; Programme: £1, 24pp; Attendance: 102

It's baking hot and I'm heading for Rotherham for my first game of the new season. I can hardly wait. My chosen destination is Parkgate FC, based in the Rawmarsh area of the town, where the club is entertaining Nostell Miners Welfare in the

opening day NCEL Division One fixture. After a stress-free journey taking in some lovely countryside around neighbouring Conisborough, I arrive at the Roundwood Sports Complex in good time. A sign directs you along a narrow driveway down to the car park and the main entrance. It's a sporting oasis here with the local golf club and course clearly visible on the left. Despite the heat a number of golfers are still playing in their designer sweaters. Now that's what I call a handicap - phew! Although you cannot see the pitches the impressive facilities belonging to Rotherham United FC Academy who also share the site stand proudly opposite. Behind here at the top of a short climb you arrive at the large brick-built clubhouse with its first-floor bar affording patrons a terrific elevated rural vista - who would have believed this peaceful oasis was once a busy steel works?

Indeed, the club was formed out of the Park Gate Iron and Steel Company and subsequent creation of the British Steel Corporation back in 1969. They joined the Sheffield & Hallamshire County FA Senior League and the Yorkshire League as BSC Parkgate in 1973. Renamed as RES Parkgate in 1984 as the local steel industry was run by a private company, they won the Rotherham Charity Cup in 1983/84. When the Corus Group PLC took over in 1999 the *Steelmen* (as they are nicknamed) began a successful period culminating in promotion to the NCEL Premier Division in 2006/07. Between 2010 and 2012 the club finished second in the NCEL Premier Division and enjoyed a fine run in the FA Vase reaching the third round proper. After a frustrating campaign in 2017/18 the club were relegated to the NCEL First Division. With new owners Liberty Steel acquiring the facilities last year there is a new optimism that better times are ahead.

Once through the pay-gate directly behind the goal you can appreciate the three-sided layout of the ground. Immediately to the right a low covered stand offers four rows of seating with an adjacent tea bar in the centre. There is open standing to the left with the changing rooms tucked away from view and accessed along a path in the corner. The entire area behind the left-hand side touchline is bordered by a tall hedge is out of bounds to fans. There is flat hard standing (well a perimeter path to be exact) behind the far goal where a grassed area completes this end of the ground. The area along the far side touchline is quirkily raised up high on a grassy bank - here there are several rows of terracing and a low covered stand (no seats) beyond towards the corner flag. If you are taking match day pictures for *FGIF* this is the best place to get a taste of the action below.

Today's game played in blistering heat is a bit of an endurance test to say the least for both sets of players and spectators alike - the match is punctuated with several hydration breaks (quite right too). After missing a hotly-(pardon the pun) disputed penalty early on Parkgate are forced onto the back-foot for most of the game and the visitors from Wakefield take their chances clinically, eventually running out comfortable 3-0 winners in front of a hundred or so spectators. With only a couple of hours rain having fallen during the scorching summer months the pitch surprisingly looks in excellent condition - to be honest I had expected to see more of a straw-coloured surface. Top marks to the ground staff for their efforts.

Refreshments were available from the tea bar throughout the afternoon and a well-attended BBQ was set up at the back of the stand near to the entrance. Sadly, when my stomach started to rumble and the thought of a tasty cheeseburger came to mind mid-way through the second half the young lady working on the griddle had already wilted and closed business for the day. A neat glossy full-colour 24 paged programme priced £1.50 was issued for the game. Complete with club history, line ups, fixtures, details about the visitors this was a decent production covering every reading requirement for the football neutral to browse during the half-time break. Amongst other things I noted with interest that the sports therapists on duty in the opposing dug outs today were actually boyfriend and girlfriend. Ouch!!

By the time the match had finished (prolonged by a player injury late on) it was almost five o'clock. I hurriedly made my way towards the exit where I slowly momentarily as one of the committee members was on hand (literally) to thank every single spectator for turning up (what a great touch!). After picking up speed again I bolted back down the hill and managed to get back into the car just in time to hear those unmistakable opening bars of *Sports Report* playing on the radio airwaves. I thought how nice it is to be back hopping once again...have a great season wherever you go. And finally, a visit to the Roundwood Sports Complex comes highly recommended.

*Edited on 04/09/18*