

## RAMBLINGS REPORTS 2018-19

updated on 22/05/19

**R No.50: *WebEd*** - Saturday 11th May 2019; **Leeds City** (v Beeston St Anthony's); West Yorkshire Football League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Adel War Memorial Association Ground; Church Lane; Adel; Leeds; West Yorkshire; LS16 8DE; Result: 4-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 82 - REPORT TO FOLLOW

**R No.49: *WebEd*** - Wednesday 8th May 2019; **Stamford Bridge** (v Rufforth United); York Football League Junior Cup S-F; Kick-Off: 6-45pm; Venue: Low Catton Road; Stamford Bridge; York; East Yorkshire; YO41 1DZ; Result: 2-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 22

The village of Stamford Bridge in the East Riding of Yorkshire is approximately five miles to the east of York and about twenty miles west of Driffield and sits astride an ancient ford on the River Derwent. The Romans established a fort here about 70 AD. around which later developed a large civilian settlement focused on a bridge close to the present town. The Battle of Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066 is the traditional end of the Viking era in Britain. In this battle Harold Godwinson repelled the invading Norwegian force led by his brother Tostig Godwinson and King Harald Hardrada of Norway - but three weeks later his loss at the Battle of Hastings allowed the Norman conquest of England.

The settlement was called Pons Belli by the Normans, meaning battle bridge. The A166 east-west road crossing the river at Stamford Bridge is one of the main roads from York to the East Riding and the coast. The road bridge in the village was closed in 2007 for just over 11 weeks, so that essential repairs could be carried out, in light of the enormous volume of traffic that uses it, exceptional for such an old bridge (dating from 1727). The village suffered from record floods in November 2000 which seriously flooded countless businesses and homes. Flood defences have now been installed, costing £3.7 million.

After another very wet day I'm heading out for my second early evening game of York Football League Junior Cup action in just three days. Thankfully the mouth-watering semi-final at Stamford Bridge Football Club beats the worst of the heavy rain that has been falling in the Wolds for most of the day and is definitely taking place. The club usually plays it's matches at the well-appointed SB Sports Association, but with cricket taking priority on the field now, tonight's game has been switched to their 'secondary' site located about a mile further along Low Catton Road.

The beautiful tree-lined venue is fully enclosed on all sides with open fields awash at this time of year with rape seed adding a splash of colour to the rural setting. Next to the main car park are a number of portacabins which are normally used as changing facilities but are not needed tonight as the players turn up already kitted out when they arrive in a convoy of vehicles from the main site. The main pitch (one of two here) is bordered down one side by a tall hedge and trees which

provide a bit of cover from the incessant drizzle (the sort which gradually seeps right through your clothing).

For those fellow anoraks amongst you who love scanning league tables, it makes interesting reading to learn that three of the four clubs involved in both of tonight's semi-finals finished in the top four places in the YFL Division Two: (1) Malt Shovel; (2) Stamford Bridge; (3) The Beagle and (4) Rufforth United. The other semi-final match sees Malt Shovel (league champions) take on Pollington (sixth) in Selby. To reach this stage the hosts had come away from Wilberfoss with a 6-2 victory whilst opponents Rufforth United had beaten The Beagle 3-2 on a trip to Acomb in the last round.

With the light fading fast the three officials decide quite rightly to bring the kick-off forward by ten minutes - the right call just in case a penalty shoot-out is needed later to decide the winner. The game attended by just over twenty spectators most of whom watch the action from under the shelter of their brollies is a close fought contest. The hosts scoring either side of half-time take a two-goal lead and look to have won the game before the visitors pull one back midway through the half. Despite constant pressure Stamford Bridge manage to defend superbly in a highly-charged last fifteen minutes to keep the score at 2-1. The result now means Stamford Bridge will take on Malt Shovel (who win the other game 2-0) in the final to be played at Huntington Sports Club next week.

Despite the poor weather this had been another terrific night's entertainment. To be honest I have really enjoyed my recent travels and would recommend watching games in the York Football League to all travellers - check out the fabulous club website for more details and inspiration. With the prospect of ticking off the main ground I am sure that it won't be long before I come back to Stamford Bridge Football Club that's for sure. On a more positive note I've written this review without referring to a certain west London Premier League club once!! The joys of non-league hopping continue. Have fun wherever you go.

**R No.48: WebEd** - Monday 6th May 2019; **Malt Shovel** (v Bubwith White Swan); York Football League Junior Cup Q-F; Kick-Off: 6-45pm; Venue: Denison Road; Selby; North Yorkshire; YO8 8AN; Result: 4-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 22

It's been raining all day and I'm not feeling too confident that I will get in my footy fix tonight. However, a quick check phone call late in the afternoon to the Selby-based club Malt Shovel FC provides plenty of encouragement as the cup match gets the green light and will take place as planned. As I come off the M62 and head cross-country at Goole the skies grow very dark once again and the heavens open with heavy rain soon bouncing off the car bonnet and reducing my visibility. I'm now starting to wonder whether this downpour will lead to a dreaded postponement. Dodging many flooded sections of road as I pass the mammoth Drax power station, is not fun but I continue on the last few miles of my journey (in hope) finally arriving at my destination with thirty minutes to go before kick-off. Thankfully as I find a car parking space, I notice the players taking to the field as they prepare for this mouth-watering YFL Junior Cup Quarter-Final (or Third Round) tie.

As the club logo shows Malt Shovel Football Club was founded five years ago in 2014. The club which takes its name from the pub of the same name in Queensgate (alongside the River Ouse) plays its games off Denison Road in Selby. They have several other sides playing in local football: apart from membership of the York Football League the club also participates in Sunday, Vets, Ladies and junior section representative football competitions. The club has played in the YFL for four seasons and has an impressive record to date finishing in 2015-16 (D4) - 8 out of 12; 2016-17 (D4) - Winners/11; 2017-18 (D3) - Winners/8 and 2018-19 - Winners/12

The self-contained, council-owned ground (also referred to by locals here as the uplifting '*Stadio Denison*) is run by outsourced company Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust. There are two pitches on site with the nearest one (to the entrance) having a smart fully railed fence (painted in blue) around its perimeter. The players get changed in a long green-coloured portacabin set up in the corner just a few yards from the pitch. Another container (complete with club badge on the side) used for equipment storage is found at the opposite side of the car park. At present there are no dug-outs or spectator cover. The whole venue is dominated by the plant works belonging to a large French-Italian owned distilling company *SedalcolUK* whose business covers a 32-acre site on adjoining land. The former *Tate & Lyle* sugar factory is now a major producer of grain alcohol in the country and has created over four hundred jobs in the town since it opened back in 2011. For the hopper-snapper standing behind the goal at the far end it certainly makes for an imposing backdrop to the action on the pitch.

Both sides from the YDL Second Division come into tonight's cup tie on the back of two contrasting league seasons. For hosts Malt Shovel this has been a terrific campaign having won the title whereas for opponents Bubwith White Swan escaping relegation by one place after Clifford FC were deducted twenty-four points, an adjustment made for fielding ineligible players, was probably one best forgotten. As the rain eases up the game kicks off ten minutes early. It's the visitors from Bubwith (dressed in a garish bright pink easy to see in the dark kit) who open the scoring after a quick counter attack in the second minute to take an unexpected lead. It doesn't just catch out the home defence but also a few late-comers who arrive just before the scheduled 6.45pm start. Malt Shovel equalise before half time and add a decisive second just after the hour mark to lead 2-1. After further constant pressure they net two more goals to end the game with a more respectable score-line based on the chances they created and missed. They now book their place in the Junior Cup Semi-Final (vs. Pollington) to be played here in just two days. That's the price of success for you! Special mention must go to young Bubwith goal-keeper Sean Lenz who has a cracking game between the sticks and easily wins my vote for Man of the Match. The match played in dull overcast and drizzly conditions is attended by just over twenty spectators including a number of hoppers who have travelled over from Wakefield. Despite the incessant rain leading up to the kick-off the pitch is in excellent condition and plays perfectly. Neither a programme nor refreshments are on offer for tonight's game.

To find out more about this friendly club check out the club's busy *twitter* account and the invaluable YFL site at: <https://www.yorkleague.org.uk/> . The joys of watching games played on grass in the wet weather continue -just! Get lucky wherever you go in the rain for your footy fix.

**R No.47: *WebEd*** - Saturday 4th May 2019; **Telegraph** (v AAK); East Riding County League Division Three; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Burton Agnes Sports Club; Rudston Road; Burton Agnes; Driffield; East Yorkshire; YO25 4NE; Result: 3-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 20

It's the end of the season and after scrolling through the scant list of matchday 'hoppertunities I've managed to find a local game with quite a lot resting on it. The ERCL3 top of the table clash between Bridlington-based side Telegraph Football Club and visitors AAK from Hull is an eagerly-awaited 'winner takes all' contest with the victors earning promotion as runners-up (to division two of the competition) behind the already confirmed champions Chaos United FC. The journey up to Bridlington starts early as *Mrs WebEd* and I are 'doubling up' today with a visit to the beautiful Burton Agnes Hall at mid-morning before taking in the football match afterwards.

This must-see Elizabethan manor house in the village of Burton Agnes, six miles from neighbouring Driffield was built by Sir Henry Griffith in 1601-10 with designs attributed to Robert Smythson. It stands adjacent to the older Norman Burton Agnes Manor House, originally built in 1173, both now Grade I listed buildings. The main facade is built a story higher than the rest of the house to contain a gallery running the full length of the second floor, with the result that the minor side facades are asymmetric. The main rooms vary in size due to the recessions of the bay windows but the important feature of the interior is the Long Gallery, which runs the length of the main front; it is covered by a wagon-roofed, richly plastered ceiling. Even though the house has been through many renovations, a great deal of the 17th-century fittings remains in situ such as carved woodwork, plaster and alabaster. Today, the estate is owned by the Burton Agnes Preservation Trust and is managed by Cunliffe-Lister and his mother, the Hon. Susan Whitelaw a relation of the late Viscount William Whitelaw (former Conservative MP).

The surrounding gardens boasting over 3,000 plant species include a walled flower garden with a central chess board laid on black and white paving stones. The games theme also incorporates draughts, snakes and ladders and hoop toss each found in a separate garden surrounded by plants selected by flower colours. There is also a market garden area with attractively planted seasonal vegetables. Whimsical statues abound throughout the grounds. Various artists' work rotates through the grounds and galleries regularly. A woodland walk is well known locally for abundant snowdrop blooms in February. Both the Elizabethan hall and the remains of the old Grade I listed manor house are open to the public throughout the year and the venue is well worth a visit.

After completing a good two and a half hours of sight-seeing and finalising our purchases with a couple of bird books from the gift shop, it was time to attend our game. Thankfully the Burton Agnes Sports Club is literally a stone's throw from here and can be found on the opposite side of the road. It's a picturesque setting

enclosed on two sides with views of the rolling Wolds landscape (as well as glimpses of the upper walls and hoisted flags from the Hall) backing onto the tree-lined playing field which shares its facilities with the local cricket club. The car park is accessed at the end of the field (to the left) with a small pavilion providing separate changing rooms beyond. The main football pitch which runs parallel to the road is bordered by a hedge and trees over to the right-hand side of the field. A neatly mown cricket square is marked out centrally - it seems as if cricket matches may have already started here with the clearly painted boundary line overlapping part of the football pitch.

A quick conversation before kick-off with a couple of the committee members reveals that the club who represent the Bridlington real ale pub in Quay Street (with the same name) has played its games at the BASC for a number of years now. I am told that the players prefer to travel out here rather than use the local council pitches in the town. Both guys explain that the facilities at the sports club are much better in terms of changing accommodation and the playing standard of the pitch.

As expected, the game turns out to be a cracker, worthy of my match of the day tag. The strong end to end breeze plays an important part in the outcome of the game with all but one of the goals being scored at the same (pavilion) end of the ground. Bransholme-based AAK take advantage of the following wind and open the scoring after ten minutes. Telegraph who soak up a lot of pressure are back in it drawing level just after the break before stunning their opponents with two further goals mid-way through the half. To add to the excitement the visitors pull one back late on when the ball is headed home from close range. With ten minutes added time extending play the hosts manage to hang on to earn that all-important second promotion place. The game played in a mixture of heavy showers, bright sunshine and a cold strong wind was attended by twenty spectators including a couple of players from Chaos FC who no doubt were interested to see who'll be joining them next season. As expected, neither a programme or refreshments are on offer for the game.

Although this was their last league game, Telegraph FC are still involved in some cup football taking on Market Weighton in the ERCFA Country Cup Final played next week at the Roy West Centre (ER county HQ) at Inglemire Lane in Hull. For details about this game and others check out the excellent and regularly updated club *twitter* feed and the *FA Full-Time* league site.

A hop to this lovely football outpost and friendly little club comes highly recommended to all travellers. The joys of exciting end of season games continue. Have fun if you get chance to attend one in the few remaining weeks of the season.

**R No.46: WebEd** - Wednesday 1st May 2019; **The Butchers Arms** (v Limestone Rangers); Scunthorpe & District League Division One; Kick-Off: 7pm; Venue: Winterton Pavilion; Newport Drive; Winterton; Scunthorpe; Lincolnshire; DN15 9QD; Result: 1-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 25

A bit of a debut for me tonight as I head over to 'Martyn (with a 'y') Girdham Country' for my footy fix. This will be the first ever game I've attended where the host team is a pub side playing in a Saturday league. Formed by some of the regulars only three years ago, The Butchers Arms Football Club plays its games at the well-appointed Winterton Pavilion located opposite the village school along Newport Drive. For those interested this is less than a mile away from the West Street home of Martyn's beloved NCEL-side Winterton Rangers FC. A small car park leads to the new pavilion building with its ornate gabled clock on the left. It's a superb community hub with excellent facilities incorporating changing rooms and a main hall offering a wide range of sporting activities for its members.

As I arrive pitch-side the place is a proverbial hive of activity. The field is packed with young children (and their parents) who are attending junior football training hosted on several mini pitches which are marked out on the enclosed tree-lined rural site. Thankfully I manage to spot the main adult pitch in the middle of the venue where both sides are playing their final league game of the season in what is a bit of a dead-rubber, as they say. There's a bit of ill-feeling amongst the home ranks who are already out on the pitch waiting for their opponents to arrive from the village Willoughton, some ten miles away from here. Thankfully it's not long before they turn up and after a bit of a chat with the young referee Ethan Nundy, the 7pm kick-off is eventually brought forward by ten minutes. I've a feeling that the televised Champions League game between Barcelona and Liverpool might be the deciding factor here!

For the end of season, it's a decent competitive fixture and on balance of play is a good advert for the first division of the Scunny League. Sadly, this top division has now been whittled down to only eight participating teams which necessitates sides having to play each other three times (to give a total of twenty-one games) in order to make it viable. The league committee has also introduced several cup competitions which helps not only to avoid blank Saturdays but also maintains active interest in local football amongst all the players, clubs and fans. One wonders though how long this situation, now commonplace in many leagues across the country, can continue? For the record the visitors are extremely lucky to snatch a goal in added time to win by 2-1 when a draw seemed a fair result.

The game played on a dry and bumpy pitch in mainly dull conditions (and in near darkness towards the end) is watched by over twenty spectators including a couple of fellow hoppers: although Martyn is not one of them I spend most of the second half in the company of Gordon from Leeds and Stuart from Thorne as we compare notes about the local hopping scene and generally put the football world to rights. As expected, the club don't do programmes or refreshments (only Barnetby United FC in this league do - for more details see R No.9 below).

As always it was nice to get in another early evening game before the season comes to a close in a couple of weeks. My return journey home was thankfully a relatively short one and almost stress free. I say almost as I spent most of the time praying that I would get back safely as the fuel gauge had been on orange (or very empty) since setting out from home. Not realising that I'd left wallet on the dining room table until I got to Winterton, the twenty-minute ride back was accomplished

successfully and without any enforced stop waiting for an AA technician to bail me out. I managed eventually to refuel the next morning at a station just around the corner from FGIF HQ. The joys of watching football closer to home continues. Have fun (and some fuel) when you set off for your next end of season game.

**R No.45: *WebEd*** - Saturday 27th April 2019; **Dodworth Miners Welfare** (v Denaby United); Sheffield & Hallam County Senior League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: Dodworth Miners Welfare; High Street; Dodworth; Barnsley; South Yorkshire; S75 3RF; Result: 7-0; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 25

As I head west along the M62 I'm still in two minds as to which game to watch this afternoon. My choice is either a trip (re-visit) to the Victoria Pleasure Grounds for Goole AFC v Hall Road Rangers in the exciting relegation decider at the foot of the NCEL Premier Division or a visit to Dodworth, near Barnsley, for a Sheffield County Senior League fixture. With heavy rain forecast for the rest of the day I realise that both grounds have cover, so it's just a matter of whether I pick a potentially cracking game over a new ground opportunity. Subconsciously as the rain and wind pick up once again, I drive straight past the junction for Goole and my *FGIFocus* quickly turns to visiting another new ground - as they say once a hopper, always a hopper. It seems a good decision too as I approach the outskirts of Barnsley the rain eases off and there is the sight of blue sky on the horizon.

Dodworth Miners Welfare Football Club plays its games at the Dodworth MW Sports Club located a of miles miles from Barnsley town centre, just the other side of the M1 j37. It is found down at narrow driveway off the High Street behind the Thornely Arms pub. I managed to find one of a few spaces left in the tight unmade car park. Being a multi-sport-venue, the site also caters for rugby, bowls and football. To reach the football ground you pass a couple of bowling greens (with an old mining wheel on display) on the right, the Tappers Bar to the left and follow a narrow path turning right down to the vast playing fields. You will not fail to be taken at the superb green vista which immediately greets you at the end of the path as you overlook the surroundings. Pride of place for the grounds' collector though is the massive cavernous stand with sloping metal roof and steep concrete steps of terracing which lead down to the pitch below - it really is quite impressive and best photographed from the open grass standing areas at both ends and on the opposite side. It must be big enough to hold at least a couple of hundred spectators. Check out the large club logos on the back wall. The main pitch which is fully railed with dug outs positioned at the opposite ends of the stand is next to the club's rugby ground which runs parallel on the land behind. Over to the left (at the end of the rugby pitch) is a small brick changing pavilion which provides changing rooms for both football teams and match officials and is also used by the thriving Dodworth MW Juniors FC section.

Dodworth MW FC spent three separate spells in the Yorkshire Football League, with a highest finish of 7th in Division Two, in their first season in the competition in 1959. In more recent times they have made superb progress on the field since joining the S&HCSL only three seasons ago. After gaining successive promotions in the league over the last two years they are now vying for honours (along with North Gawber Colliery FC) at the top of the Premier division. Before today's game

(the penultimate fixture for the season) which sees the visit of Denaby United to the Welfare, they sit in second place in the table and with a win here this afternoon, have a chance to leapfrog their rivals who are not in action today.

The visitors from Doncaster who have endured a terrible campaign spending most of it near to the foot of the table, arrive with only ten players. As expected Dodworth prove to be too strong and win the game comfortably by a 7-0 score-line (including three penalties) to go top with one match remaining (Gawber still have three to play). The match played in wet and very windy conditions strong enough to dislodge my cap, attracts about twenty spectators including a couple of fellow hoppers from Hull who told me that they share their travelling time with season ticket duty following the Tigers at the KCOM. It was interesting to note and compare that a crowd in excess of a hundred was gathered to watch the club's opening rugby league match which was being played over on the adjoining pitch. Although the club do not issue programmes, cold refreshments can be obtained from the Tappers Bar located near to the main entrance. The management team explained that despite their meteoric rise up the leagues and overwhelming success in such a short space of the time the club would rather establish itself first in local football before trying to climb the pyramid.

Another cracking afternoon's entertainment. A visit to Dodworth MW Football club comes highly recommended to all travellers all of whom I'm sure will be suitably impressive by the superb main stand, reminiscent of those found at many old Scottish football grounds. The joys of salivating over beautiful old football structures continues. Have fun whenever you come across one!

**R No.44: WebEd** - Tuesday 23rd April 2019; **Yorkshire Amateur** (v Hemsworth MW); Northern Counties East League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 7.45pm; Venue: Bracken Edge; Roxholme Road; Leeds; West Yorkshire; LS7 4JG; Result: 0-1; Admission: £5; Programme: Yes - 20pp, £1; Attendance: 50

I'm on a mission! With the end of the current season almost in sight, I'm trying hard to squeeze in a head-spinning total of fifty games for the campaign. I realise, compared to many of the country's more avid hoppers who achieve four times this total in their annual football travels, this is a paltry amount. I think some travellers had even surpassed this figure by the end of September. How do they do it? Nevertheless, this milestone satiates my hopping appetite perfectly and as my wife often reminds me, size isn't everything! To be honest I don't do many evening games these days mainly because it's not ideal for taking matchday photographs, something best left for the weekends in my opinion. So, tonight is a rare outing to watch a game under floodlights, my first in fact for nearly eighteen months since a visit to watch Haverhill Borough FC (v Haverhill Rovers, ECLP, 2-3; 230) back in 2017.

Trying to find the Bracken Moor home of Yorkshire Amateur in the Leeds suburb of Harehills is like trying to find the proverbial needle in a haystack. I hope that you don't find it as difficult to track it down as I did this evening. According to the excellent NCEL website page the ground address has two sat nav codes to choose from (one of these refers to the nearest street of houses which back onto the site). As I got nearer to my destination the small flag marking the arrival point on my in-

car computer simply directed me to a road junction off Roxholme Grove. After wasting ten minutes resetting the sat nav with a different post code I tried again but to no avail, ending up just around the corner. Totally frustrated by now I decided to ask one of the locals walking past for some help. Thankfully the young guy who lived in the area told me that the place was a b\*\*\*\*\* to find and advised me instead to drive back down to the end of the road, turn left and then try taking the third turning along Roxholme Road as: 'All the roads are called Roxholme-something around here mate!' He was right and five minutes later I spotted the ground entrance sign and pulled up well ahead of kick-off into the small unmade car park. At last!

I'll leave the photos in the album gallery to serve as a more accurate ground description for you and pass on a few thoughts instead. From first impression it's clear that the club is proud of its roots judging by the large number of posters, portraying former players who represented the club before making it into the big time in the pro-game, dotted around the place: Brian Deane; James Milner and Stuart Naylor stand out, to name a few. It certainly is a pro-active club that serves the local community very well - a larger than average percentage of players, coaching staff, committee members drawn from mixed ethnic origin, a demographic which represents the local area well. As I was taking photos of the ground before kick-off (whilst it was light enough) I was invited into the club house to take a look at an inscribed momento which was recently awarded to the club to honour its official centenary. If you come here take a look and you'll be impressed too.

The club was founded as Yorkshire Amateur AFC by a local man called Kolin Robertson in Leeds during November 1918. Around the time that Yorkshire Amateur formed and began playing, a local side named Leeds City FC became defunct; Robertson gained a lease for their ground Elland Road to play friendlies at, but by 1920 they sold it to the newly formed Leeds United for £250. The club became one of the original founding members of the Yorkshire Football League in 1920-21, and played at various grounds during this period, even sharing with Harrogate Town at one point. The following year they became the first ever football club from Britain to tour the Eastern European countries of Latvia and Estonia and in season 1930-31 they moved to their current home of Bracken Edge. The most successful year in the club's history was in 1931-32; they reached the FA Cup 1st Round going out to Carlisle United 3-1, they reached the semi-finals of the FA Amateur Cup before going out to Marine 2-1 and were crowned champions of the Yorkshire Football League Division One. For the second time in their history, the club reached the FA 1st Round, where they played Lincoln City in 1945-46. Yorkshire Amateur pulled off a 1-0 victory at against their Football League opposition but were squashed 5-1 in the second leg, ending their FA Cup dream. Yorkshire Amateur became a founder member of the Northern Counties East League in 1982, where they still remain.

Tonight's match, the final home game of the season for the Ammies, sees the visit of Hemsworth Miners Welfare to Bracken Edge. It's a top end of the table encounter (4<sup>th</sup> v 7<sup>th</sup>) with the men from South Yorkshire just edging things winning a really drab encounter by a single goal coming in the 85<sup>th</sup> minute when Adam Knight slips the ball under the advancing keeper. Despite having the league's

leader scorer in Ashley Flynn (40 for the season) the hosts have only a few goal-scoring chances each snuffed out by a well organised Hemsworth defence. The match played a really hard and bumpy pitch is attended by fifty spectators. During the game I get into conversation with a local football fan (of Bradford PA FC) who tells me that he spends much of his season as a football league scout and gives me the low down on some of the players he has been watching. Apparently, he was responsible for referring Jamie Vardy from local football to Fleetwood Town FC! A smart glossy 20-page full colour programme priced £1 is issued for the game - in fact I manage to obtain the first couple of copies out of the box which arrive at the turnstiles seconds after I pay my admission. Great timing! Refreshments are dispensed from Kell's Kitchen but as this is limited to curry (which I don't like), I decide not to bother.

Even though this is a poor game I still enjoy my visit to Bracken Edge and would recommend a visit here to all hoppers. The joys of watching floodlit football are re-kindled once again. Have fun when you set off for a game under the bright lights!

**R No.43: WebEd** - Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2019; **Wheldrake** (v Helperby United); York Football League Division Three; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Wheldrake Village Hall; Broad Highway; Wheldrake; York; North Yorkshire; YO19 6BU; Result: 2-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 18

This is definitely a case of hopping deja-vu. It's lovely sunny spring day and I'm covering almost the same route as I had just a few days earlier as I head towards the outskirts of Selby for another dose of York Football League action. The last few miles of journey to the lovely village of Wheldrake is also part of the forthcoming Tour de Yorkshire course used by the pro-cyclists competing in Day One of the competition in early May. Indeed, there are several yellow warning signs already in place to help give road users advance notice of this prestigious event which will finish in Selby town centre, some five miles away.

The football club plays its games at the local village hall which is visible as you enter the village along Greengales Lane. To gain access requires a bit of a detour though, meaning you turn right twice before coming up Broad Highway towards the main entrance. This is the central hub of sport in the village with football, cricket, tennis and bowls sharing the facilities in a large field enclosed by a sturdy fence and hedges. A small pavilion which houses changing rooms is found on the left close to the entrance on the near side of the field. The main pitch is marked out immediately in front and runs parallel to the main road. A number of benches run along the touchline to offer some basic seating for spectators. As expected, there are no dedicated dug outs or cover at pitch-side.

Today's game is a crucial fixture with both sides still in with a fighting chance of winning the title. It's tight at the top and the divisional table shows that current leaders Heslington (who have completed all of their games finishing on 48pts) can still be caught by both Wheldrake (in second place on 45pts), their opponents Helperby who are in third place (on 42pts) and fourth place Wombledon Wanderers are also in the mix (on 44 pts) with two games left to play. In essence if the hosts

could win their final two games, the other sides wouldn't be able to catch them and the title would be theirs.

Wheldrake who dominate play win a cracking game by a closer than expected 2-1 score-line to earn three vital points and move them into second place (only on goal-difference). The match played on a really hard and rutted pitch attracts almost twenty spectators who bask in the bright warm sunshine. With the end of the football season moving ever closer a large number of cricket club members are busying themselves during the afternoon. Small groups dotted around the pitch can be seen mowing the square; painting the sight-screens and putting up the practice nets behind the goal as well as building a new score-board! Sadly, there were no refreshments as the pavilion is only opened during special occasions (surely the presence of the *FGIF* founder would warrant this?!).

I found everyone here to be most welcoming during my short stay. A trip to Wheldrake FC in this lovely part of North Yorkshire (just) comes with my recommendation. Details of the club can be found on its most pro-active *twitter* account as well as the impressive YFL website which is now one of my favourites. Ah the joys of being a football anorak continue! Have fun wherever you go in the last few weeks of the season.

**R No.42: WebEd** - Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019; **Riccall United** (v Strensall Tigers); York Football League Division One; Kick-Off: 6.30pm; Venue: Riccall Regen Centre; Landing Lane; Riccall; Selby; North Yorkshire; YO19 6PW; Result: 1-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 24

Who needs modern technology anyway? Over the last few weeks I have found that my normally trusty sat-nav has been playing up and falling short (literally) of expectations. It gets me vaguely to where I want to go to but I am invariably left to work out the last bit of the journey for myself. Indeed, tonight was no exception as I arrive at the Riccall Playing Fields only to find the place completely deserted ahead of my chosen game in the York Football League. After getting out of the car to find out more I thankfully noticed a small sign on the crown of the bend (further along Landing Lane) directing me to the local sports and community centre just around the corner. Could this be the place I am looking for? Completing the last three hundred yards of my itinerary (and without GPS) I pull up in front of the Riccall Regeneration Centre, home of Riccall United FC - at last I have reached my destination. Phew!

Tonight's game is a crucial one for the hosts who hang by a thread onto their Division One survival. With two league games left four points could be enough to prevent relegation leaving Bishopthorpe FC and Heworth FC to scrap it out at the bottom, falling ever close to the trapdoor into the second division. Visitors Strensall Tigers from the northern suburbs of York arrive at the RRC for their final game of the season. Sitting in mid table they have nothing but pride to play for and shouldn't (in theory) pose a threat for the hosts. But in practise it doesn't always work out like this, does it?

After a fairly even opening twenty minutes it's United who take the lead when Aidan Heslop lobs the ball over the keeper from close range to give his side the

upper hand going into the break. As the game seemingly peters out (in the fading light), it looks as though United have done enough to hang on to gain three vital points. But with only a few minutes left Tigers snatch a late equaliser through Jason Heslop who scores following a clever counter-attack down the left to share the spoils and in doing so breaking United hearts. The game is marred when two players (one from each side) are sent off late on following a poor tackle and subsequent stamping as tempers flared. A crowd just in excess of twenty is in attendance. Although I did not partake, hot drinks and assorted cold snacks were available in the sports centre at half-time.

The Riccall Regeneration Centre is a registered charity and community centre. The impressive architect designed, award winning building offers a variety of facilities and services to meet the needs of the local community, business, education, sport and leisure catering for sporting events to business functions, parties, charity fundraisers, civil partnerships and weddings. The modern building with its unique domed glass roof was officially opened in 2000 by HRH Duke of York after £1.5m was raised by The Big Lottery, Community Fund and the The Coalfields Regeneration Trust as well as many smaller local trusts and businesses to fund its construction and provide equipment to run it.

The football ground which is situated around the back of the centre is fully enclosed by a combination of housing and open fields. It certainly has plenty of character to admire. Surrounded by a red and white perimeter railed fence, with netting behind each goal and a couple of old dug outs (used as spectator cover) on the far (and near) sides, the site has in truth seen better days. Much of the land behind the playing area is akin to a wilderness with plenty of overgrown weeds, nettles and long grass all adding to its rural charm. Picnic benches placed outside the community centre and behind the outer fencing provide some seating close to the goal at the near end where access is found at each corner. As the welcome sign next to the main entrance states the venue is also home to the Riccall Tennis and Bowls Clubs who use the adjoining facilities.

Whichever division of the YFL United find themselves in next season a visit to the RRC in Landing Lane is heartily recommended to all hoppers. Information about the club can be found on its *twitter* account and on the pages of the terrific YFL website. If you haven't taken a look yet, go the *FGIF* Links section (Pyramid sites) and check it out at the foot of the page. The joys of midweek hopping continue. Enjoy whichever early evening game you go too. And remember to clearly enter the ground post code before you set off, just in case!

**R No.41: *WebEd*** - Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019; **Skirlaugh** (v St George AFC); East Riding County League HE Dean Cup Round Three; Kick-Off: 1pm; Venue: Skirlaugh Playing Fields; Mill House Way; Skirlaugh; Hull; East Yorkshire; HU115DY; Result: 3-4; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 13

Today's important cup tie should have been played a couple of days ago on Thursday evening but the hosts Skirlaugh were unable to raise a full side in time. As a compromise the visitors from East Hull agreed to the new date requesting an earlier kick-off, hence the 1pm start. My journey from *FGIF* HQ to Skirlaugh (pronounced *Skerr-lah*), doesn't take long and I arrive at my destination in plenty

of time. The village found about seven miles to the north-east of the city (along the A165 heading up towards Bridlington), is largely home to those living on the commuter belt to Hull.

The club play games at the local playing fields which are shared with cricket and where parking space is at a premium. Tucked down Millhouse Way this once rural outpost is now set inside an ever-expanding residential estate where three sides are surrounded by new houses, many still in the process of being built as evidenced by the assorted construction vehicles, large piles of bricks and bags of cement espied through the wire fence behind the goal! Thankfully all is quiet as the workforce takes a day off from their hard labour.

On the one open side, there are some lovely scenic views over the gentle rolling hills leading onto the horizon. It is possible on a clear sunny day like this to pick out the many new wind turbines harnessing an alternative source of power in the distance - indeed this area of the East Riding is one of the forerunners in the country to develop such a sustainable resource. Look out too for the top of St Augustine's Church peering above the roof tops to the right: the parish church built by Walter de Skirlaw who later became the Bishop of Durham in the late 14th century is a sight to behold.

As expected, the ground facilities here are fairly basic and comprise a couple of portacabins used for changing rooms and storage, both located beyond the cricket square over on the far side of the field behind the goal to the right. It comes as no surprise either that there are no pitch-side dug outs, spectator cover and refreshment point on site.

Upon arrival I am encouraged to see both sets of players out warming up thirty minutes ahead of the kick-off. Today's game is an intriguing affair with hosts currently in second place in the ERCL Second Division taking on Premier Division side St George AFC. To reach this stage of the of the competition, both sides have beaten more-lowly (in terms of league status) opposition with victories over Hedon Rangers Reserves (4-2) and Cottingham Forest (5-1) played ten days ago, respectively.

For the hopper today's game is a terrific contest and a great advert for county league football with plenty of goalmouth action and goals: Skirlaugh look to have the done enough to win the tie after taking a comfortable 3-1 lead into half-time only for their opponents to make a determined second-half fight back snatching victory late on to book their place against local rivals AFC North in the last eight. The match played in warm sunny conditions on a freshly mown pitch attracts over twenty spectators including several senior home club members who stand behind the boundary fence next to the entrance to the field. Some even placed themselves in the adjoining building plot to save time in retrieving balls landing in there from stray shots.

During my visit I also get into conversation with team manager Marc Daddy who informs that this has been one of the best seasons for the club in recent years. Although the team have recently been knocked out of the ERCFA Junior Country Cup (S-F v Telegraph, 1-3), they are still actively involved in the league junior cup

which has reached the semi-final stage where a tie against South Cave United Reserves beckons in a couple of weeks. There's still plenty to play for in the league too with the possibility promotion to round off what could be a memorable campaign. Marc tells me that this was also the last game for Skirlaugh stalwart Chris Grange who has given a guard of honour by his colleagues as he enters the field of play. To mark the occasion, he was also given the team captain's armband for the afternoon - a nice touch! The club also has a close community link with pro-side Hull City FC and much charity fund raising and development work helps to form a strong partnership between the two.

A visit to this friendly club situated in the plain of Holderness comes heartily recommended. Details about matches can be found on the club's twitter account and on the FA Full-Time site covering the ERCL. The joys of attending local cup football matches continue. Have fun when you attend your next local cup game.

**R No.40: WebEd** - Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2019; **Church Fenton** (v Old Malton St Marys); York Football League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Church Fenton Cricket Club; Busk Lane; Church Fenton; Tadcaster; North Yorkshire; LS24 9RJ; Result: 1-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 40

A few days ago, I read with interest, the latest football news on the pages of the excellent *York Press* website. An informative article covering the local York Football League read *Old Malton St Mary's one point from premier division title triumph in York Minster Engineering Football League*. Although the club had several games still left to play, I thought it would be a good idea to see if they could achieve this feat in their next game which was listed on the latest round of fixtures (on the competition site) as an away trip to Church Fenton FC.

By coincidence it's only Church Fenton who can mathematically draw level on points if they win all of their games and if Old Malton lose all of their four remaining matches. With Fenton also needing to overturn a goal difference of 72 in the process it's a nigh on impossible task - a bit like winning one of the weekly *Lottery* draws. But you never say never.

With just over an hour's driving completed I arrive in the lovely village of Church Fenton located on the outskirts of Tadcaster. The name itself means a village with a church in fen or marshland. The village was recorded along with nearby Little Fenton as *Fentun* in the Domesday Book of 1086, with no mention of a church. It wasn't until 1338 when the church of St Mary the Virgin was built that reference to the name Kirk Fenton was made. The area was largely agricultural with some quarry workings up until the arrival of the Leeds and Selby Railway in 1839, resulting in the development of local industry, including a brick-works and tileworks. Further lines to Harrogate, Leeds and York followed, so that at one point there were three stations. All but one of these were demolished in the 1990s. The village is also noted for its airbase, RAF Church Fenton, built in 1936 as a fighter base and took part in the defence of northern cities and the east coast during the Second World War. It later became a training facility before being used as a flying school and continues to do so today. Interestingly with boundary changes the village formerly in the West Riding of Yorkshire is now in the county of North Yorkshire.

The football ground which shares its facilities with the cricket club is located to the east of the village along Busk Lane. A small non-descript entrance and gate signed CFCC opens out into the car park which backs onto the cricket field. A lovely stone-built pavilion with a smart veranda spanning its entire length houses the changing rooms and a tidy bar lounge area to the left. A small gap between the perimeter hedge and the end of this building leads through to the football ground (fully enclosed with a neat post and rail fence) which is found in a separate field around the back. Behind the nearest goal and outside the pavilion a number of picnic tables are placed on the grass to offer some seating. Close-by the outer frame belonging to some portable cricket nets had been placed on the cricket boundary line. Indeed, before the football match started a groundsman was busy tending to the outfield on his sit on mower-cum-roller; with blue skies and sunshine there was certainly a feeling that spring was in the air and the cricket season was just around the corner. Thankfully for hoppers taking in a game here there is no problem when both sports overlap at the start or end of the season as each team plays on its own separate site.

As anticipated, it was Old Malton St Mary's who won a tight hard-fought game by a 2-1 score-line (with all the goals coming inside the first half hour) to seal the Premier Division title with three games to spare. The game played in beautiful warm, sunny conditions attracted a crowd of over forty including many whom had made the trip down from Rydale. This result now moves them thirteen points clear at the top of the York Minster Engineering League, which they have won in dominant fashion, dropping only ten points this campaign. It's impressive to think too that this is St Mary's fourth title triumph in the last eight seasons, having also lifted the crown in 2012, 2014 and 2016. They have been runners-up three times in that period too, and have not finished outside the top three since 2007. That's quite a record isn't it?!

This had been a thoroughly enjoyable visit. Special thanks must go to club secretary Andrew White for his kind hospitality and the sports department at the York Press for publishing some of our match photos on their website: <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/sport/football/17558533.minster-league-pic-special-old-malton-st-marys-seal-premier-division-crown/>. A hop to Church Fenton FC in this scenic part of North Yorkshire comes heartily recommended to all hoppers. Details of the club can be found on their *twitter* account as well as on the pages of the superb York Football League site (see the Links page) and generic *FA Full-time* site. The joys of hopping in all parts of Yorkshire continue. Have fun when you visit here!

**R No.39: WebEd - Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April; Eastrington Sports Club (v Holme Rovers); East Riding County League HE Dean Cup Round One; Kick-Off: 6pm; Venue: Eastrington Playing Fields; High Street; Eastrington; Goole; East Yorkshire; DN147PH; Result: 2-3; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 32**

With the nights starting to get lighter, it can only mean one thing - my first chance to get in an early evening midweek game. Thankfully the East Riding County League fits the bill perfectly with my hopping desires as the perennial HE Dean Cup competition is now in full swing with ties taking place over the coming weeks. Most

matches in this knock-out contest are played in midweek with fixtures arranged on a regional basis, meaning clubs don't have to travel far especially in the early rounds.

My chosen game is a bit of a David v Goliath contest with new boys Eastrington Sports Club (ERCL Division Five - 4/12) taking on Holme Rovers (from the Premier Division - 6/10) in a first- round tie. On paper it looks to be a bit of a mis-match (pardon the pun) but as footy fans will tell you anything can happen in cup football. For Eastrington it suits them to have the underdog title and with home advantage they will relish the challenge over their rivals from just up the road.

My journey towards the outskirts of Goole takes about thirty minutes. After leaving the A63 just before it joins the M62 I followed the B1230 through Newport and Gilberdyke and turned right along Station Road at Newland. The last couple of miles takes you back over the motorway and the railway crossing at Eastrington towards the village where the ground is found by turning left along Main Street.

The Sports Club which shares its facilities with cricket is found in quite an exposed location being bordered by open fields on two of its sides. The basic but homely pavilion is adjacent to the newly built village hall over to the right. The building contains both changing rooms as well as a bar area complete with tables and chairs. Lookout for the bespoke stools (with named backs) belonging to club members in here. Around the back are a couple of container units which provide storage space for ground staff equipment and a useful area to place the cricket sight screens. The football pitch is marked out on the far side of the field and runs almost parallel to the busy railway line behind which conveys passengers on trains heading to and from the Hull city terminus. Apart from a children's playground there is as expected not a lot else here.

Incredibly as I arrive early for the scheduled 6pm start, both teams are already out on the pitch warming up ahead of the kick-off - they need to warm up too as the wind is beginning to bite pitch-side! Just when it seemed that the match referee had made other arrangements for the evening, he suddenly appeared (already changed) having left the much warmer confines of his car parked up near the entrance on the opposite side of the field. Phew!

The game was a thoroughly absorbing contest with the result in doubt right up until the (bitterly cold) end! It was hosts Eastrington who deservedly took the lead after only five minutes following a mix up in the visitor's defence to cause a bit of tension amongst the travelling fans. Luckily for them Rovers equalised just before half time with a cracking volley from outside the box. After the break the boys from Holme-on-Spalding Moor (to give the place its correct title) added a second and looked to have the game wrapped up creating further chances to extend their lead. But with only two minutes remaining Eastrington were back in it scoring again after a clever counter attack down the right. With the light fading fast and the prospect of penalties looming (there's no extra time in these ties) the visitors snatched a winner in the dying seconds (converting a rebounded save) to set up a home time against South Cave United Reserves at ho(l)me on Saturday. The game played in dull and overcast conditions on a poor bobbly pitch was attended by about thirty spectators. If you're into trains you'll love it here with the frequent

and varied number of engines and carriages roaring past during the game. Although the referee decided to play forty minutes in the first half the second period was according to my timepiece nearer fifty minutes! It was certainly a great advert for ERCL football. Now where's the draw for the next round? The joys of watching early evening midweek matches continue...have fun whichever one you decide to pick!

**R No.38: WebEd** - Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019; **Whitkirk Wanderers** (v AFC Headingley); West Yorkshire League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2.30pm; Venue: Whitkirk Sports & Social Club; Selby Road; Whitkirk; Leeds; West Yorkshire; LS15 0AA; Result: 2-1; Admission: Free; Programme: 20pp, £1; Attendance: 27

The power of *FGIF!* Each week I am truly honoured to receive the many, varied and wonderful ground reviews from my fellow contributors who write in regularly about their travels to grounds far and wide. It's a labour of love and Sunday mornings just wouldn't be the same without them. They really make entertaining reading and beat those large hefty broadsheets hands down when it comes to topical news. So, prompted by the inspirational report from hopping guru that is Sir Keith Aslan I am on my way over to Leeds for my footy fix today. Indeed, it was only a week ago that his favourable jottings from Whitkirk Wanderers Football Club landed in my inbox.

As Keith points out the club is found in a semi-rural location on the eastern suburbs of the city. The entrance is just past the Brown Cow, a large gastro pub on the opposite side of the Selby Road and next to the local cemetery. A sign on the main gates which reads *Whitkirk Sports Club* leads you along a narrow driveway down to the impressive sporting facilities. A large cricket field with its well-appointed pavilion (and ornate clock) is immediately in front with tennis courts over to the left and bowling green to the right. The football club is hidden from view on the far side of the venue in an adjoining field beyond the cricket boundary line.

The modest club buildings complete with veranda and patio come into view at the bottom of a slight decline where a smart sign welcomes visitors. The recently enlarged changing rooms (which are locked with steel shutters when not in use), tea bar (more about that later) and toilets are housed along here. The main (and only) pitch which runs lengthways and is accessed from this end (in the corner) has a notable end to end slope. The site surrounded by open fields is fully enclosed with a neat post and rail fence painted in alternating sections of blue and yellow which borders most of the playing area. The home and away dug outs are set at opposite sides of the half-way line (I often wonder whether this is to avoid trouble). Although there is no cover there are some old disused portacabins set on a steep grass embankment behind the nearest goal. From this terrific elevated vantage point you can appreciate the sloping pitch as well as the rural vista beyond. From the far end the delightful St Marys church makes for a lovely focal point and enhances the backdrop to play perfectly.

Today's game sees the visit of struggling AFC Headingley to the Whitkirk Sports Club for an important West Yorkshire League Premier Division fixture. With newly-promoted Wanderers lying currently in sixth place (out of sixteen sides in the top division) this has been a cracking season. As the game enters stoppage time (or

should that be added time?) with the score standing at 1-1, young Derick Ngwana turns his marker on the edge of the area and curls the ball in at the far post with virtually the last kick of the game to snatch all three points for the hosts. You really do have to feel sorry for their opponents who looked to have done enough to earn a much-needed point and ease their fears of relegation. It's true what they say - when you are at the bottom, the luck never seems to go your way - I imagine that's what they'll be feeling on their way back to Headingley afterwards!

The game played in lovely warm sunshine throughout was attended by almost thirty spectators many of whom stood along the near touchline. Hot drinks and cold snacks were available from the tea hut if you didn't fancy walking back up to the cricket ground pavilion at half-time. Now in all the years I've been watching the non-league game (and admittedly there have been a few) I don't think that I've ever seen such a small tea bar. With just enough room inside for one member of staff the hot drinks and snacks (mainly sweets) are served through a very small hatch (hole in the wall) to customers waiting outside. Without actually measuring the opening I would reckon its dimensions would be something like 12 x 12 inches. Barely wide enough to pass a dinner plate through this bijou servery would have the McWhirter brothers (of the *Guinness World Records* fame) drooling onto their clipboards! With my daughter Steph in tow for one of her annual hopping treats we soon racked up a few pounds (in both senses of the word) with our chocolate bar purchases this afternoon!!

As Keith also points out in his summary the club issues a wonderful 20 page-programme (hence one of the reasons for his visit!). Complete with glossy blue and white cover (incorporating a white rose in the design) this contains plenty of up to date reading material including: match preview, previous reports (including the one from Keith's visit for the game against Knaresborough Town Reserves, 0-2), and, a quiz as well as all the essential stats (fixtures, results and tables) neatly interleaved between the adverts, As editor and committee member Dave Jones told me he has been compiling the club programme for the last ten years now. I'm not sure (and stand to be corrected by Keith here) but Wanderers may be the only club in the WYL who still do programmes, something which is worth noting if you have a surfeit of those paper-chasing genes.

It had been another great afternoon's entertainment. Steph and I found everyone at the club to be really friendly and accommodating to our requests for information. A visit to the impressive Whitkirk Sports Club certainly comes highly recommended to all hoppers. And finally, I would like to thank Keith for his positive contribution following his visit, certainly without which I doubt we would have travelled here today. The joys of sharing our great hobby via the internet continue. Hopefully you may find something here to inspire you - have fun if it does!!

**R No.37: WebEd** - Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2019; **Westella & Willerby** (v South Cave United); Humber Premier League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Hilltop Club; Beverley Road; Willerby; East Yorkshire; HU10 6EF; Result: 5-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 9

How time flies! It only seems like yesterday that I was pulling on my hallowed black and white jersey and tying up my *Adidas* Santiago boot laces before taking to the Beverley Road playing field. This was my first taste of non-league football in the late 1970's. Still a teenager and having just left the Wolfeton School, my playing days for Westella & Willerby FC in the East Riding County League had just begun. For the most part I played as a naïve and ineffectual right winger but loved the buzz of competing in adult football for the first time. Fast forward some forty years and I'm heading back down memory lane to watch my old club play for the first time since those wonderful days when most of my mates carried their football kit in those much sought after *Gola* and *Puma* holdalls and you could buy three pints of bitter for less than £1.

As the woven club badge shows the club was formed in 1920, although their superb website indicates that teams were playing under the banner of Westella & Willerby in around 1910-11. They competed in the East Riding County League for many decades and were renown as a club for coaching youngsters with talent. Indeed, players such as Dean Windass, Linton Brown and Gary Hobson, played some of their early senior football at Westella, and went on to have successful professional careers. At the turn of the millennium in 2000-01 they were founder members of the Humber Premier League where they spent eight seasons, their most successful campaign seeing the club finish as runners-up in 2006-07. In 2008 they joined the Central Midlands League and immediately gained promotion from the Premier Division to the Supreme Division following a second-place finish. In 2011, the league was reorganised and they were placed in the North Division, winning the title in the 2011-12 season but ground grading issues prevented the club from being promoted to the Northern Counties East League. For the 2012-13 season the club was known as *Westella Hanson* and also made a debut in the FA Vase before changing its name again, in 2014, to *Westella VIP* due to a sponsorship deal. The following year, after seven seasons in the Central Midlands League, the club was promoted to the Northern Counties East League and reverted to its name as *Westella & Willerby* name for 2016/17. Sadly, they were relegated from the competition after the 2017/18 season (finishing next to bottom) and re-joined the Humber Premier League.

Having grown from playing as a parks pitch team in the early days the club has experienced quite a nomadic existence and played its football on a number of grounds within the local area. With promotion came the problem of finding a suitable ground share which would appease the respective league officials and ground graders. Here are just five clubs/grounds that spring to mind and no doubt readers may think of some others: Blackburn Athletic FC (HPL); North Ferriby FC (ex-NPL etc); Bishop Burton College (Hull City FC junior ground); Dene Park (former Hall Road Rangers FC) and Barton Town (during the NCEL days).

Thankfully the club seems to have found some stability having been fortunate enough to become part of the set up at the Hill Top facility in Cottingham which is run by the Cottingham Young People's Sports Foundation (CYPSF) Trust. The Trust have now published their own independent website where it is possible to make donations to help fund the running of the facility. Despite some trials and tribulations in the early days over the state of the playing surface they managed to

secure funding alongside another tenant club at the site (Cottingham Tigers RLFC) to the tune of approximately £1m to rejuvenate the whole playing arena and build some new changing facilities. Thanks to the help of the *Football Foundation*, *Sport England* and *GemTrust*, the site saw a new drainage system installed, the pitches re-seeded and a new six room changing facility completed and used for the first time during the 2008/09 season. The clubhouse and adjacent facilities were together re-named the 'Roy Waudby Sports Arena', after one of the leading sponsors (ex - Hull FC chairman whose son Roger was in my class at school) and the venue is now seen as one of the best sporting facilities in the area at a time when a number of football facilities within the city have disappeared.

The club is found off the Willerby Hill Roundabout close to the Castle Hill Hospital. A right turn off the main by-pass (A164 towards Beverley) leads you past a *Total Fitness* gymnasium on the left down through a beautiful wooded private road and buildings belonging to the *Humber Foundation* teaching hospital. The ground is located at the end of this cul-de-sac with a turning to the right leading to the car park with the large enclosed playing fields catering for football, cricket and rugby beyond. Entrance is through a small gate next to the RW Pavilion which provides the changing accommodation. A small white board is placed outside the door with details of the day's fixture written on it. The Hill Top social club is housed in a much larger building further along and a small licensed bar dispensing drinks and snacks is open during the game. The main pitch is marked out over to the far left and is bordered by an open field running parallel and by the fenced car park behind the goal. Two dug outs are positioned close to the half-way line but no other spectator facilities exist at present. A perimeter rope is attached to thin plastic posts along the near side touch-line.

Today's game sees the visit of South Cave United from Melton to the Hilltop Club. With both sides just above the fringes of the relegation divide line, victory today would almost certainly mean Premier Division football next year. Defeat on the other hand would create a bit of uncertainty and a few cursory glances towards those sides beneath them. The result went according to the form book with the hosts dressed in those familiar black and white shirts coasting to a comfortable 5-1 victory. In fact, the game had been sewn up by half-time with Westella already leading 4-0. The match played in bright but cold conditions on a bobbly surface (and badly in need of a cut), attracted less than ten spectators including a father and his son who as regulars here told me that there really isn't an appetite for football in the area which explained the poor turn out! Refreshments were available from the club bar which had conveniently opened just before half-time.

During the afternoon I got into conversation with a couple of the committee members who like myself are now part of the imaginary Wolfreton School Old Boys committee. Special mention must go to Ian Gray or 'Fiddler' (as he's referred to round these parts) who has been with the club for over forty years now. Joining the club as a youngster Ian played here for many years before hanging up his boots to become involved in the coaching side of the game as the Westella Director of Football. He's been instrumental not only in developing young players (there are now half a dozen junior teams playing here) and guiding the club up through the football pyramid system but also in achieving the '*Charter For Quality*' ideal

buying into the FA's '*National Facilities Plan*'. Although he has taken more of a back seat in recent years it's still clear he has ambitions for the club and points out that all the money spent on ground-sharing over the years could have been used sooner to develop the present ground. At half-time I also met club secretary Rob Lester (whose sister Karen was also in my year) another loyal servant at Westella with over thirty years of experience under his belt. Rob who is also the current Chairman of the Humber Premier League tells me that the club has now found a playing level and suitable ground arrangement that should be sustainable for the future. Let's hope so!

Details of the club can be found on its own website and *twitter* pages as well as the HPL *FA Full-Time* site. I'm really pleased to have made a visit here today and re-lived a few memories from my distant past. I still can't believe it's over forty years since my foray into non-league football began and the great influence it has no doubt made on my groundhopping since! The joys of travelling down memory lane continue. Have fun when you go back somewhere that is special to you!

**R No.36: *WebEd*** - Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019; **Chalk Lane** (v East Riding Rangers); Humber Premier League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Hull University 3G; Inglemire Lane; Hull; East Yorkshire; HU6 7TS; Result: 3-0; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 15

For football travellers looking for a game that is almost guaranteed to beat the worst of the wet and windy weather, this area of the country is an absolute godsend. With plenty of artificial grass pitches dotted around the outskirts of Hull city centre there are usually several games to choose from to satiate your hopping taste buds when the elements cause problems.

After a quick look at the local fixtures I noticed that both Chalk Lane FC (at the university 3G) and Sculcoates Amateurs FC (on the St Mary's College 4G) were involved in Humber Premier League action this afternoon. With both venues located almost adjacent to each other and within easy walking distance from the Hull University Sports Centre this seemed the best place to go before deciding which game to watch. Thankfully I managed to find a parking space as permits are waived on a Saturday!

As you'd expect the Sports Centre occupies a very large area, boasting superb facilities (which apart from numerous pitches includes a magnificent indoor fitness suite) and caters for a wide range of sporting activities. To save time I thought it best to ask for directions at reception and with the help of the duty staff I quickly discovered that Chalk Lane FC actually played on a 3G pitch literally just over the road. With the rain starting to fall heavily once again I decided to stick with this game and leave a hop to watch Scully at St Marys College (a further ten-minute walk up the road) for another day.

After crossing the road, the narrow gate entrance (marked HUSG) to the ground soon comes into view. To the left a smart pavilion provides changing facilities for the many teams using the site: with football and hockey matches being played on adjoining 3G pitches it's certainly a hive of activity (pardon the pun). A sports development course was also being held with attending members occupying one of

the committee rooms inside the pavilion. Players access the pitch through a back door with the banner *#We are Hull* emblazoned above it. The floodlit cage used for today's game is quite unique (compared to many others I've been to over the years) as the sides are much lower (up to chest level) than both ends directly behind the goals. There is also a separate concrete walkway around the perimeter so that spectators can watch the game from different positions which is much more enjoyable than being segregated in one area. Two dug outs (with marked technical areas) are positioned behind the right-hand touchline close to half-way. Hoppers may also be interested to know that the venue is also home to Hull City Ladies FC and a wide banner attached to the far side advertises this. If you walk a couple of hundred yards along Inglemire Lane you will come to the Roy West Centre, home to the East Riding County FA, a site used to host many county cup finals as well as games involving Hull City's junior sides.

The club were formerly known as Smith and Nephew FC. After playing in the Hull Sunday League they joined the Humber Premier League back in 2006-07 and won the Division One title in their first season. After promotion to the HPL Premier Division the following year the club continued to show their fine form by winning the league again. A change of name to Chalk Lane FC (associated with a Working Men's Club off Hessle Road) saw the club lift the winning trophy again in 2008-09 (the first as a new club). Although they didn't manage to retain the title for the third successive time the club has finished in the top half of the table on no fewer than six occasions over the last ten years sealing its reputation as a well-respected side in the city and beyond. Honours came once again last season when Chalk Lane were crowned champions after a titanic struggle against favourites Pocklington Town who had led the table for most of the campaign. To rub salt in their wounds Chalk Lane also beat them 2-0 in the final of the HPL Whiteheads Fish & Chip cup played at the RWC in May.

Once again, they are battling it out at the top of the league and at the start of play, lie in second place, some five points behind their old adversaries from the Yorkshire Wolds. With three games in hand they are having to play catch up - it's almost the same scenario as twelve months ago. This afternoon sees the visit of bottom placed East Riding Rangers who come here have endured a terrible campaign. To make matters worse three players have cried off before making the trip from Cottingham leaving them without a first-choice keeper and a couple of defenders and only one sub. Incredibly its club physio and former Hull City keeper Dave Mail who dons the green top as he takes to the field (or artificial grass) making an impromptu appearance at the ripe old age of 56 years! The game goes according to the form book with the hosts winning comfortably 3-0. Dare I say but the Rangers keeper plays a blinder making several fine saves to keep the score down. With leaders Pocklington winning at Scully down (coincidentally at St Marys just down the road), it's as you were at the top of the table. It will be interesting to see how the sides get on when they meet each other in the game of the day here next Saturday.

Like all clubs in the league Lane don't do programmes but if you're peckish a range of hot drinks and snacks are available from a couple of vending machines inside the pavilion. If you go try the hot chocolate, it's delicious! The match, played in wet

and windy conditions, attracts just over a dozen spectators. On the adjoining 3G pitch to the left new club Hull Cosmos were playing Easttrington Sports Club (ERCL5 - 0-5): worth remembering for another wet weather option!

I found everyone at the club to be most welcoming during my short stay. A visit to Chalk Lane FC at the Hull University Sports ground comes highly recommended. Details about the club can be found on their pro-active *twitter* account as well as the generic league pages at the *FA Full-Time* site. The joys of hopping in bad weather continue, have fun whichever 3G pitch you go to!

**R No.35: WebEd** - Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2019; **Bridlington Rovers** (v Hutton Cranswick SRA); East Riding County League HE Dean Cup Round 1; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Bridlington CYP; Gypsey Road; Bridlington; East Yorkshire; YO16 4AY; Result: 5-4; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 12

Formed over one hundred years and fifteen years ago in 1903, Bridlington Rovers Football Club is the oldest club in this seaside town found along the East Yorkshire coast. Together with a number of other local sides (like fellow ERCL team FC Lodge) Rovers play their matches on a site at the new Bridlington Sports Centre located off Gypsey Road in a residential area to the west of the town centre.

The former council run facility was saved from closure almost three years ago when it was successfully transferred to the Bridlington Club for Young People (now called the *Bridlington CYP*) following the completion of a new £25 million East Riding Leisure Bridlington development. It would have become surplus to the council's operational requirements but an agreement was quickly reached with the club to transfer it as a community asset, meaning the centre could continue as a sports and community hub, supporting opportunities for increased sports participation in the Bridlington area for all age groups.

The modern complex now includes a terrific 3G football pitch, well equipped boxing gym, modern sports bar and function room, large indoor multi-purpose sports hall, refurbished changing rooms, meeting rooms and office space and is a superb recreational facility for everyone to play and enjoy sport. Rovers is part of the football section of the CYP and thanks to funding from the Football Association, the Premier League and a commuted-sums grant from East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the new 3G pitch was installed. The club also became the East Riding FA Charter Standard Club of the Year in 2018 praised for promoting the game at both junior and senior level. To date Rovers currently run five senior sides covering men's first and reserve teams; women's first team; men's veterans first and second teams as well numerous junior sides. The CYP is pro-active in organising local mini leagues aimed at recreational users wanting to play the game. A link to the CYP is found at: <https://www.bridlingtoncyp.org/> .

After days of heavy rain and forecasts for further unsettled windy weather I decided to use one of my 3G back-up options for my footy fix (in fact my first of the season so far). Today's ERCL game saw the visit of neighbouring Hutton Cranswick SRA to the CYP for a first-round knock-out cup tie in the HE Dean Cup. This competition which normally starts towards the end of the season and features many midweek games (when the clocks go forward) tends to be more

geographically friendly with clubs in close proximity drawn against each other in the early stages. Having wrapped up their season (in the ERCL second division) already, this technically could have been Rovers last game of the campaign. I wondered how they would fare against their supposedly higher-level opponents, currently lying in second place in the premier (top) division.

Upon arrival I parked up outside the front of sports centre which is just inside the main entrance off Gypsey Road. Access to the CYP is made by following the path to the back of the cream coloured building on the right where the playing fields also come into view. A couple of wide steps lead up to a smart patio complete with picnic chairs and tables. Inside a large open bar offers a range of drinks and snacks to visitors. Look out above the bar for the club banners representing the CYP (Bridlington Rovers FC, Bridlington Rangers FC and Burlington Jackdaws FC) and the array of boxing gloves belonging to the local club on display in the windows.

The 3G pitch which runs parallel with Gypsey Road is found on the opposite side of the main car park. Like many other football cages one section down the near side is reserved for spectator viewing only as the rest is out of bounds. Although there is no cover, two red moulded plastic dug outs for team subs and coaches are positioned inside the cage near to the half-way line. A poignant sign sponsored by *Grassroots Football* attached to the fencing reminded patrons (attending junior matches) that: *'This is a game. These are children. Coaches are volunteers. Referees are human. Mistakes happen. It's their game, just let them play'*. Great advice! Whilst I was here a Driffeld & District League cup semi-final match between FC Lodge and Pocklington 4ths was being played on a pitch over on the far side of the field (result: 3-4).

For the second week in a row my chosen cup game was an absolute belter, literally going right down to the wire! With the lead changing hands on no fewer than four occasions during the game I was really hard pressed keeping up with all the action. To make matters worse I had left my trusty *FGIF* Match Stats card on the dining room table and had, at one point, to resort to making notes in pen on the back of my hand - how sad is that? Doh!! With only eight minutes remaining the game reached its crucial stage when Louis Leddy (82) beat the offside trap and placed the ball past the keeper's outstretched hand to put Rovers in front making it 4-3. However, with three minutes remaining Cranswick were back in it again with Michael Tate (87) firing home following a goal mouth scramble to leave the score at 4-4. Incredibly with three minutes of stoppage time gone on the clock and with the prospect of added time looming, Nathan Bristow (90+3) fired the ball home from close range with the last kick of the game to make it 5-4 and put Rovers through to the next round. As the stats show it had been a remarkable game and a great advert once again for county league football: 0-1 (5); 1-1 (10); 2-1 (25); 2-2 (42); 2-3 (61); 3-3 (67); 4-3 (82); 4-4 (87); 5-4 (90+3).

Despite the strong blustery wind, a constant feature throughout the game, it was played in mostly sunny but cold conditions in front of a dozen frozen spectators (who looked well insulated judging by their many layers) and plenty of large seagulls flying overhead. I was pleasantly surprised how well the new spongy crumb surface behaved like grass offering excellent footing for the players and

allowing for a much truer bounce of the ball. I know that many traditionalists prefer (to play/watch) their football on grass but I think that these new artificial surfaces have got to be the way forward for all clubs. It's a no brainer when it comes to increasing community participation (at all times of the day) and raising much needed revenue. Come on you dinosaurs at the FA, let's embrace technology not bury our heads in the mud!

This had been another terrific afternoon's entertainment. A visit to the new Bridlington CYP home of Bridlington Rovers FC comes highly recommended to all ground collectors. The joys of watching exciting (high-scoring) cup games continues. I hope you have fun and catch a few goals wherever you go! And finally I would (belatedly) just like to thank Andy Bloomfield sports editor at the *Bridlington Free Press* (amongst other publications) for his help in adding a few photos from the game to the excellent *BFP* site at: <https://www.bridlingtonfreepress.co.uk/sport/football/photo-focus-bridlington-rovers-v-hutton-cranswick-sra-1-9647958>

**R No.34: WebEd** - Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2019; **Kiveton Park** (v Dodworth Miners Welfare); Sheffield & Hallam County Senior League Brian Bradley Memorial Cup Q-F; Kick-Off: 1.30pm; Venue: Wales High School; Storth Lane; Kiveton Park; Sheffield; South Yorkshire; S26 5QQ; Result: 2-3; Admission: Free; Programme: 12pp, £1; Attendance: 59

Formed in 1881, Kiveton Park Football Club has an impressive history almost as old as the former colliery village itself. After joining the Sheffield FA, the club, in its early days, played in a number of local competitions including Sheffield & District League; Hatchard League and Holbrook & District League. Matches took place on any field it could procure until settling on Wales Cricket Ground as its regular venue. After the Second World War they entered the prestigious Yorkshire League but found this was a step too far and switched to the Worksop & District League (competing as Kiveton Park United FC) before gaining some success the East Derbyshire League in the early 1960's. By now the club was based on Hard Lane, with Sheffield Wednesday opening the new dressing rooms and pavilion by playing a friendly match. Initially, only the pitch nearest Hard Lane was used and it wasn't until the 1960s that the first team moved to the adjacent playing area which became a more permanent home and one used for many years to come.

Confident that they could fare better than last time, the club re-applied for membership of the Yorkshire League and won promotion to the Premier Division in the mid 1960's. After a merger between the Yorkshire League and the Midland League, the club joined the newly formed Northern Counties East League (NCEL) winning promotion to Division 1 where they subsequently spent five years in mid-table obscurity. By 1991 the club took the decision to resign from the NCEL and join the Central Midlands League (CML) - a competition that had been formed five years earlier in the wake of the Miners' Strike which had created rivalries between Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire based clubs. The village was feeling the effect of the downturn in the coal industry, and the football club was no different. Although they won promotion to the CML Supreme Division in 1992 and finished third in the top flight a year later, the writing was on the wall in terms of the

club's finances. The support of the local miner's welfare had dried up, and vandals ruined what little was left of the infrastructure at the club. In 1996, two years after the closure of the colliery, the sad decision to withdraw from competition was taken, and it seemed football in the village had come to a close.

In 1999 the team was re-established and re-admitted to the CML once again. Promotion back to the Supreme Division came in 2003 and two years later they lifted their first trophy in over 30 years when beating Athersley Recreation on penalty kicks in the final of the newly formed Sheffield Association Cup. Days later, they received the hammer blow that they had been relegated to the Premier Division, despite finishing in mid-table, because of Hard Lane's lack of floodlights. The club stayed in the CML until 2013, when they decided to move to the County Senior League (CSL), a South Yorkshire-centric successor to the old Hatchard and Association Leagues, and a former mainstay of the reserve team.

The CSL's Premier Division was at level 11 of the English football league pyramid (in effect the same as the CML division Park had been competing in for years) and so it seemed logical to transfer to a more local league to cut down on travel costs. The 2016-17 season saw Kiveton promoted to Division One of the CSL, but it also brought some sadness, as the club left their home of over a century at Hard Lane. After a falling out (of sorts) with the landlords (read between the lines here) the decision was made to move to the playing fields of Wales High School. For those readers wishing to gain a more in-depth club history about the club (including recognition of Herbert Chapman, one of the club's famous former sons), click on the following link taken from the KPFC website:

<http://www.kivetonparkfc.com/history/>

Located between Doncaster, Sheffield and Rotherham, the club's new base at the Wales High School is not difficult to find. After leaving exit 31 of the M1, follow the A57 and A618 towards Wales before turning left along the B6059 (at the Asia Palace). After about half a mile, turn left and continue up Chestnut Avenue and join Storthe Lane where the school (with its large Welsh flag) soon becomes visible on the right-hand side. Park here and walk to the ground entrance at the end of the road. The site is set inside thirteen acres of school playing fields with rolling hills making for a cracking backdrop behind. At present all the main facilities are housed inside a number of large containers which are placed end to end along the near side of the field - a small tea bar, toilets and changing rooms are in situ. The near side touchline is roped off. Although there are a few bucket seats in place, there is as yet no dedicated spectator cover or dug outs - this is all part of the long-term planning as club Chairman Neil Newman explained to me at length before kick-off. By acquiring a long-term lease on the site and with the necessary funding assistance, there is plenty of ambition to make several necessary ground developments which will be completed in partnership with the school. Neil feels it is just as important to encourage young players and increase participation at the club as it is to attract investment and to build the infrastructure including a new clubhouse, permanent perimeter pitch rail and tidying up the site. They seem to have their priorities right here.

Today's match was an absolute belter (in more ways than one!). This was in fact Kiveton's second game in this competition set up for teams who have been knocked out of the League Cup in the early rounds. With Dodworth Miners Welfare currently top of the Premier Division table and Kiveton (fifth in Division One) looking for a tenth straight win, an interesting tie was in prospect. The hosts took an early lead when Gorman (15) rounded the keeper to score from close range but Dodworth equalised through Barlow (29) on the half hour. Shortly before the break a twenty-man brawl ended with a man from each side getting their marching orders. Park were then reduced to nine men when another red card was shown by the referee midway through the second half and soon after Dodworth took advantage with a neatly worked counter attack finished by Barlow (60). Despite going behind Kiveton hit back making it 2-2 when Bratley (81) fired home from the edge of the area with only ten minutes remaining. Just when it looked like there would be another 30 minutes of extra-time, Dodworth nicked it with the very last kick of the game - Severn (90+3) shanked a cross which somehow looped over the keeper and into the net. For Kiveton this really was a cruel way to end a great match. The game played in mainly overcast conditions attracted a terrific crowd of nearly sixty spectators which included at least six hoppers, three of whom were fellow snappers.

A superb photocopied 12-page programme containing all the basic essentials and a brief history of the visitors from Barnsley sold for a £1. Travellers should note that affable editor Lee Hicklin who normally produces only ten copies per game decided to do a few extra today in view of a larger crowd expected today. I managed to get hold of mine with only a handful left! It's also worth mentioning that Lee who also edits the excellent club website (with snippets of match video coverage thrown in for good measure) plays for local side Sheffield International FC in the new Sheffield Fair Play League and is a keen and knowledgeable local hopper posting his travels on the *Non-League Matters* site (as the contributor known as *Kivo*). Any visit here is not complete without a quick pit stop off at the tea bar which not only sells plenty of hot and cold food and snacks but is the place to pick up much cherished souvenirs. Apart from buying a programme and a club lapel badge here, I also took advantage of a superb bacon roll (courtesy of culinary pro Gordon Johnson), hot cuppa and the best piece of Bakewell Tart to tempt my taste buds in ages - all for under a tenner, what more can you ask for?!

It goes without saying that Kiveton Park FC is definitely a club on the up and a visit to the Wales High School is well worth making! More information can be found on the club's website, *twitter* feed and *Facebook* page as well as on the generic *FA Full-Time* website. Although a lot of work still needs to be done to develop the ground, I am sure that everyone connected with the club has the ambition, dedication and drive to make things happen. Watch this space for more! After my disappointing trip to Epworth last week, how refreshing it is to say that the joys of hopping have well and truly returned. Have fun wherever you go!

**R No.33: WebEd** - Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019; **Epworth Town Colts** (v Nottingham); Central Midlands League Division One North; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: South Axholme Academy, Burnham Road; Epworth; Gainsborough; Lincs; DN9 1BY; Result: 7-0; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 24

Since leaving the Scunthorpe & District League at the end of last season Epworth Town Colts FC have made an encouraging start to life in the Central Midlands League. A quick glimpse of the table shows they currently sit in fourth place (out of fourteen sides) in the newly formed Division One North. My hop today sees them take on Nottingham FC, another side who have joined the ranks of the CML this campaign.

The club is based at the South Axholme Academy just outside the village of Epworth in the Isle of Axholme, between Doncaster and Scunthorpe. The Isle is so called because before it was drained in 1620, it was an inland island surrounded by rivers and streams, bogs and meres. The school provides education for secondary-aged pupils (11-18) with an on-site sixth form centre. The facilities here are excellent with fifteen acres of playing fields backing on to open countryside. A joint venture with Epworth Town Colts, the FA and the Isle Education Trust has seen the completion of a new 3G caged pitch and superb pavilion comprising changing rooms and state of the art conference suite.

Visitors arriving at the school for football should park up and follow the main (narrow) drive bordered by perimeter hedges to the right. After passing the main buildings (on your left) the football pitch soon comes into view over on the far side of the playing field. It's quite a surreal setting as three of the sides of the ground are enclosed by extremely tall birch trees which dominate proceedings. At this time of year, the low sun casts increasingly long thin shadows right across the pitch where the light passes between the narrow trunks and thin branches onto the grass below. A new housing development backs on to the fence behind the right-hand goal. There are two clear plastic dug-outs positioned near to the half-way line on the far side but no other dedicated cover for spectators exists at present. The pitch is roped off through bright florescent yellow poles (in part) along the touchline nearest to the school.

An impressive changing pavilion is located alongside some classroom buildings and outdoor table tennis area beyond the newly funded (*Football Foundation*) caged 3G games area. Look out for the delightful meeting room with its conference style table and chairs (each displaying the club motif neatly embroidered into the back rest). There's also a neat trophy cabinet in situ which displays an array of cups and shields won by the club's various teams (ranging from youngsters right up to the men's first team). As you come back outside again you will notice a couple of 'buy-a-brick' framed sections mounted onto one of the outer walls. The names of every individual club sponsor are included to highlight community funding at its best for this level of football.

Soon after reaching the changing rooms (to check out the team line-ups) it became clear that the visitors had only just arrived. Apparently, a crash on the M1 motorway just after mid-day had led to the inevitable lengthy delay and the opponents from Nottingham had phoned through to say they were going to be late. At this point the referee announced that the game was going to start at 2.20pm (twenty minutes later than scheduled). I must say it's a good job fellow traveller and popular *FGIF* scribe, Keith Aslan, wasn't in attendance today (that's in the nicest possible sense, of course). I have no doubt that our ever-punctual poster

from Kent would definitely not have approved of such tardiness!! Although the hosts who had already been out warming up for some time by now, strongly objected to this (and can you blame them?), the young referee decided to give their opponents enough time to go through their own pre-match routine before starting the game.

I can honestly say that (for the first time in ages) I didn't enjoy watching my chosen game as much as I normally do. For a self-confessed footy grounds addict this might sound quite strange. So why all the negativity? In short, it was completely ruined by the actions of (a few) players who really did themselves no favours by showing a complete lack of respect to each other and the match referee. So here are just a few things that got on my goat: constant use of foul and abusive language; contesting and complaining many decisions; unnecessary tripping, diving and rolling around after being tackled and to cap it all time-wasting (even during the first half). Apart from the players, it was just as embarrassing to see both linos having to be cautioned after making rude comments towards the referee. I couldn't believe it when the visiting team headed back into the changing rooms at half-time and then had to be sent back out on to the field to start the second-half. I reckoned that by the final whistle at least a dozen yellow cards had been shown during the course of the match. How no-one was sent off was a minor miracle!! With so many stoppages in play (and there were loads!) the game ended at 4.20pm (that's thirty-five minutes later than expected!). I expect young referee Matthew Jackson from Derby was kept busy completing all his paperwork late into the evening. Rant over!

On a more positive note I did manage (between the interruptions) to see a few goals and for the record it was Epworth who won by a more-than-comfortable 7-0 victory. In fairness to the visitors Nottingham (who were in fifth place before play) they put up a decent fight (perhaps not the right word to use under the circumstances) up until at least half-time when the score stood at 1-0. This result naturally pleased fellow traveller Tram (of Blackpool fame) who was spared the aggro of making a revisit (due to his self-imposed torture of not counting goalless draws!) and his Geordie mate from York who joined me along with twenty other spectators to witness the occasion. They told me that for travellers like themselves, who rely on public transport, this area of the country is not one that lends itself easily to making connections (particularly afterwards) if matches kick-off later, at 3pm. Hoppers may also be interested to note that the club does not issue programmes or offer refreshments at present. I might be wrong but it seems that former S&DL side and current league leaders Crowle Colts FC may be the only club that issue in this division.

Although the game itself didn't live up to expectations, I must stress that everyone connected with the club was found to be most welcoming towards the three football neutrals who had turned up to watch the match. In particular Colts first team boss Mark Willerton was extremely helpful in providing us with the team line-ups before kick-off. I really hope that when you take in a game at Epworth Town Colts FC you have more luck than I did this afternoon. Now where's the fixtures for next week? The joys of hopping will continue I'm sure. Be lucky wherever you go!

**R No.32: WebEd** - Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019; **South Park Rangers** (v Skirlaugh); East Riding County League Junior Cup Q-F; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: South Park; South Park Road; Old Goole; DN14 8BD; Result: 1-8; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 12

The club, formerly known as Jailhouse FC was founded in 2007 and played for three seasons in the Scunthorpe & District League (starting in Division Three). After dropping out of Saturday football the club soon reformed changing its name to South Park Rangers FC (after the local park) and joined the East Riding County League, starting in division six, in 2012-13. This proved to be a successful move with the club finishing as runners-up to Cottingham Rangers Reserves and winning the Harold Robinson Memorial Cup (divisional league cup) in its inaugural campaign. Within five years the club had gained back-to-back promotions, moving up from Division Five (2017) and Division Four (2018) both finishing as runners-up. In addition, they also won the Harold Robison Memorial Cup for the second time when they beat Hessle Rangers Reserves 2-1 at Queensgate, home of Bridlington Town FC, last May. This season the club has been placed in Division Two of the competition which marks the start of an important chapter in its brief history. Hoppers may be interested to note that two other sides which come under the club banner also play in the county league: South Park Rangers Reserves FC (Division Three) play here and South Park Rangers Academy FC (Division Four) are based at Shaftesbury Avenue in Goole.

South Park in Old Goole has to be one of the county league's most remote outposts. For teams like South Park Rangers (and sides coming here) it means a lot of travelling to fulfil their fixtures considering some of the teams in this division are based in Driffield and Bridlington. Set on the extreme western fringes of the boundary with adjoining South Yorkshire, it is located just a few of miles from junction 36 of the M62 motorway. After crossing the Boothferry Bridge, a short journey takes you past the imposing port and dockland area which has dominated Goole town centre for many years, and it's then out towards Swinefleet following a route which runs very closely to the southern banks of the River Ouse which along with the Trent runs out to the Humber estuary.

Travellers here should look out for a large green name sign belonging to H Walton, a corn and feed merchants, which marks the entrance to South Park. This turning is found just before a sharp right-hand bend in the road. From here a long narrow road (South Park Road) leads you past the mills and around to the large playing field. As you would expect for such a council set-up, facilities for football are fairly basic. An old dilapidated brick building with its boarded windows houses the changing rooms over to the right, beyond a mini skate park. The field has two pitches marked on site: the main (un-roped) one is nearest to the pavilion; a second one running parallel looks unused but the posts are removed after matches. On a lovely clear afternoon like this it is possible to pick out the large towers and cranes from the nearby Hudson Ward works (a backdrop at the neighbouring Victoria Pleasure Grounds, home to AFC Goole and one which always features in ground photos). On the skyline you can also catch a glimpse of the large chimneys from the more distant Drax Power Station which seem to constantly billow thick clouds of smoke and pollutants into the air.

Today Rangers welcome Skirlaugh (pronounced *Skerr-la*) to South Park in what is an important ERCL Junior Cup tie. With traffic problems en-route it takes the visitors (from the east of the county) a good hour and a half to get here. Indeed, as I parked up on the grass with twenty minutes to go until kick-off, a car load of young players had just arrived after completing their long journey from Holderness. This competition (organised by the ERCL) is open to sides who play in Divisions Two and Three. The current league table shows that Rangers just edge the visitors by standing two places (and eight points) ahead of them in the ten-team second division. When the sides last met a few weeks ago, Rangers won 1-0 (courtesy of a Ryan Leake goal) in a league match at the Skirlaugh playing fields.

As far as football clichés go this game was certainly ‘one of two-halves’. Leading 3-0 after only fifteen minutes and heading into the break with a more than comfortable six goal lead, Skirlaugh certainly had the game wrapped up by half-time. But as it so often happens when teams appeared to have ‘done the job’, they invariably ease up. And so, after bringing on all their subs, the balance of the game changed and for the football neutral the match was all but over as a spectacle. In fact, all credit must go to Rangers in the second half for fighting on and keeping their composure - in fact they managed to grab a consolation goal, claimed by Conner Moore (84), to lose the half only 2-1.

After this impressive 8-1 victory Skirlaugh will now compete for a place in the cup final when they meet the winners of either South Cave Reserves or Hedon Rangers Thirds (who face each other next week). The visitors have also reached the semi-final of the ERCFA Junior Country Cup where they will meet Telegraph FC (coincidentally lying second in Division Three) on a date yet to be confirmed.

The game played in beautiful warm sunshine on a bumpy pitch attracted a dozen spectators. Full praise must go to match referee Stephen Baldwin who was firm and fair throughout. With Rangers in complete disarray at the break Stephen went over and encouraged them not to lose their heads and keep playing football. His psychology certainly worked!

I would also like to thank Danny Broadbent, the hard-working club secretary (and everything else!) for giving me the thumbs up about the game and helping to iron out those vital directions during my check phone call earlier in the day. The last time we spoke was at the end of last season when Rangers lost heavily to Gilberdyke Phoenix in a midweek league game played at the Ings View Sports Field. He not only reminded me of the score-line that evening but after today’s result jokingly quipped that I should never ever come and watch his team again!!!

Details about the club can be found on its informative new website as well as on the generic ERCL pages on *FA Full-Time*. Once again, it had been another cracking trip along the banks of the Humber and its tributaries. The joys of watching county league cup football continue...have fun wherever your hopping desire takes you!

**R No.31: *WebEd*** - Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2019; **Goodmanham** (v Souths); East Riding County FA Qualifying Cup Round 3; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Goodmanham Road Playing Fields; Market Weighton; East Yorkshire; YO43 3HU; Result: 2-3; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 16

As the logo on the club badge proudly highlights, Goodmanham Football Club is a newly formed side (set up in 2018) and is one of twelve teams (no less) that have joined the East Riding County League at the start of the current football season. League officials decided to enter them into Division Four (one off the bottom) and they have made an encouraging start to life in the county league currently lying in fifth place having taken points in nine out of fourteen games to date. The club plays its games just down the road at the Goodmanham Road playing fields which are actually in the neighbouring town of Market Weighton. They have arranged a ground-share with established county league side Market Weighton United Football Club playing fixtures on alternate Saturdays. It will come as no surprise then that many of the young lads (and a few older heads) here used to turn out for their rivals (in-waiting!!) and it will be an interesting derby when they ever get a chance to play each other. With United battling near to the foot of Division Three this could maybe come sooner rather than later!

Today's visitors, also new to the county league this campaign, are Souths FC who have travelled here from Preston (in case you wondered it's a village near to Hedon over on the east side of Hull). For some reason they have been placed in the bottom division for their debut season in the competition. Mind you this doesn't seem to have affected them in any way as they are currently league leaders boasting an enviable record with only one defeat and a massive goal difference of plus sixty-two so far during the campaign. For the neutral it would be interesting to see how both teams would match up given their respective league status?

The Qualifying Cup is one of five Saturday cup competitions run by the ERCFA attracting sides that usually play in the (lower divisions) of the ER County League as well as those competing in the Beckett League, Driffield & District League, Scarborough & District League and York & District League. In the last round Goodmanham travelled to Norton United coming away with a 2-1 victory and The Bison's (nickname according to the Souths FC *twitter* page) beat Fulford 3-1 at home (on the 3G cage at the South Holderness Technology College). Both matches were played in early November which may seem a distant memory for many of those involved in the cup tie this afternoon.

The game (postponed from last Saturday) turned out to be a cracking cup tie. With little to separate both sides this tough and, at times, feisty affair certainly lived up to expectations. Despite soaking up loads of early pressure it was the hosts who scored first following a quick counter attack. It was a textbook goal thanks to Ashley Bastiman (6) who covered a lot of ground to meet a cross from the right and slot the ball home past the advancing keeper. Souths deservedly equalised mid-way through the half when a rebounded shot was tapped in by Louis Dean (20) to make it 1-1, a score which stood at the break. The visitors were soon in control and added a second on the hour mark when Liam Allenby (60) netted from a tight angle. Team mate Sam Bamford (75) charged into the area before drilling the ball home at the near post from five yards out to make it three. Within a minute (literally) Goodmanham were back in it after James Saltmer (76) scored a sensational volley striking the ball from all of thirty yards out. Even from my distant vantage point at the opposite end I knew instantly the ball was struck, it was going in - it doesn't happen very often but we've all sensed that special

moment at some time in our hopping careers. Needless to say, this 30-yarder and possible contender for the *FGIF* Goal of the Season, will be a hard one to beat come May! With chances missed at both ends and time running out tempers understandably flared up and young rookie referee Thomas Atkinson from Cottingham did really well to keep a lid on things considering he only took up the whistle two years ago. With no further goals scored Souths FC will feel rather fortunate to hang on to their 3-2 lead. The result means they will now face fellow ERCL side Crooked Billet in the last eight of the competition. The game, played on a bumpy (un-roped) pitch in sunny but breezy conditions, was a great advert for the county league and cups.

Although the ground is fairly basic, the lovely leafy riverside setting more than compensates for this. With tall trees bordering three of its sides the main pitch (one of two here) has a nice enclosed feel to it. The main entrance (unmarked) leads you down a short drive to a small unmade car park. A brick building in the corner provides changing room facilities for both teams and officials as well as housing toilets and equipment storage. As expected, there is nothing else at pitch-side. Visitors (particularly avid twitchers) to the Goodmanham Road playing fields should not be alarmed by the large flock of seagulls which are apparently a regular feature here. From the first minute I arrived I was distracted by the high number of sea birds that had descended on the place: even during play they could be seen battling against the wind, soaring closely overhead, swooping down and even landing on the pitch!!

Today I was indebted to hard-working club Chairman and midfielder Kev Roberts for returning my phone call at mid-day. His help in confirming that the game was on and giving me detailed ground directions proved invaluable. He told me during the afternoon that all the players and staff here were enjoying the club's first season in the county league. Since playing their first game back in September they have been pro-active in recruiting more players and are now competing at a standard needed to make further progress on the pitch. In addition, the club have set up their own website which provides plenty of up to date statistical information as well as including a useful club contacts page. They have even added some of our photos from today's game to the new gallery page, helping to promote *FGIF*. What great service! As the welcome sign says on your way here: *Enjoy your visit to the heart of the East Yorkshire Wolds*. A hop to Goodmanham FC comes highly recommended to all travellers. The joys of village football continue...have fun wherever you go.

**R No.30: WebEd** - Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019; **Tetney Rovers** (v Horncastle Town); Lincolnshire FA Junior Cup Semi-Final; Kick-Off: 1.30pm; Venue: Fulstow Playing Fields; Thoresby Road; Fulstow; Louth; Lincs; LN11 0XS; Result: 0-2; Admission: Free; Programme: 4pp, Free; Attendance: 75

With snow continuing to fall across the Banks of the Humber and beyond, I really did fear that my footy fix would be scuppered by the weekend. Indeed, as the weather worsened overnight and further games were being called off due to the big freeze my list of possible 'hoppertunities by mid-morning on Saturday (including those played on 3 and 4G), could be counted on one hand.

On days like this access to social media really does help as clubs post the latest news about their games and state of play of their pitches (pardon the pun). Thankfully a *re-tweet* on the Tetney Rovers FC newly formed club page set up a few days earlier suggested that their county cup tie was going ahead. A quick phone call to club secretary Tank who was out on the pitch as we spoke confirmed that despite heavy overnight snowfall in the area, everything was being done to get their game on and the prospects of play were quite high. Although not quite the definitive answer I was hoping for I was nevertheless filled with excitement and decided to take my chance setting out at mid-day on my fifty-minute journey over the Humber Bridge into North Lincolnshire.

I arrived at my destination in Fulstow within the hour. I must just add here, for those who don't know, that Rovers have been playing most of their home games this season at the neighbouring village of Fulstow due to ongoing problems with their own pitch back in Tetney. However, amid leaden skies and an impromptu sleet shower, my attention was immediately drawn to the match officials who had come together for a conflagration in the centre circle. Despite what appeared to be a unanimous shaking of heads, message soon arrived to those of us gathered nervously at pitch-side and in the car park that the pitch had in fact passed their inspection and the match was going to start in twenty minutes. Phew!! Despite a thin layer of snow still covering much of the playing surface a lot of hard work had already been carried out in the morning to clear and re-paint the lines so that they were still visible around the perimeter and in both penalty areas all carried out to assist the players and officials. With only a few minutes remaining before kick-off, there was just enough time for a rope to be tied through some metal stakes along the near-side touchline and the corner flags put in their place.

Today's game, a Lincolnshire FA Junior cup Semi-Final against Horncastle Town, was one of the biggest in the club's short history. Rovers, currently lying second in the East Lincs Comb Division One (top division) had reached this stage of the competition having beaten relatively higher-level opposition with victories against Peterborough & District League Premier Division sides Stamford Lions (2-0) and Moulton Harrox (2-1) in rounds two and three respectively before beating Ruskington Rovers (Boston & District League) 4-1 in the quarter-final. Opponents Horncastle had overcome Central Midlands League side Epworth Town Colts with a terrific 4-0 victory to reach the semi-final.

As expected, the match was a closely contested and, at times, physical affair. With little to separate both sides, Rovers unexplicably pressed the self-destruct button after the break. It was ten minutes into the half when the keeper made a complete mess of a simple through pass from the visitor's Andrew Bullivant (55) by twisting awkwardly and somehow directing the ball back into his own net. With increased frustration and a lack of discipline it wasn't surprising when two home players then saw red (cards) for making poorly judged tackles mid-way through the half. Everyone along the touchline thought referee Mark Swift (attired in a matching black woolly hat) had made the right calls. Having gained a numerical advantage Town soon doubled their lead when sub Jac Wright (80) broke through a defensive gap and fired home from a tight angle. Rovers couldn't find a response

and it was the Wongers who won the tie comfortably with their 2-0 victory. Good luck to them in the final.

The match played on an increasingly thawing and muddying surface stood up well throughout the ninety minutes. A crowd of nearly eighty spectators including a large noisy away contingent who had arrived at the ground in a couple of mini-buses after enjoying a few pre-match pints in the village ahead of kick-off. Stockport based hopper Len and his pal from Chester had travelled over from the much snowier Pennines to get here after leaving their base at 10.30am. It was lovely to play catch up since our last meeting when we stood on the touch line at Crowle Town Colts FC in much warmer conditions back in August.

Great praise must go to both clubs and match officials for making sure the game went ahead today. Special mention must go to Rovers' club secretary (and everything else) Tank (aka Anthony George) for his titanic input today. Together with manager Dave Smith, lino Jerry Ward, the rest of the players and helpers, he coordinated a massive team effort throughout the morning to shovel snow off the pitch, brush out the lines and re-mark them before the final pitch inspection. Without any of this I'm pretty sure the game wouldn't have gone ahead at all. Tank also produced a superb four-page colour programme (with all the hallmarks of Barnetby United FC's programme editor Lee Fielden) using his PC and printer. Covering all the essential matchday reading material this was issued free of charge for the game - what a totally unexpected treat. He even served the three travelling hoppers in attendance with a complimentary hot mug of coffee at half-time. What service and very much appreciated!

Tank also explained that the club hope to continue playing here for the foreseeable future if, or until, the problems with their pitch back in the village of Tetney (about three miles away) are resolved. Although the set-up here is still fairly basic the enclosed field provides space for grass car parking, two-pitches marked side-by-side and a modern pavilion with much better changing and toilet facilities than they are used to. This building which resembles a bar at one end, is positioned alongside the touchline with a more than useful concrete patio area that can be used for hard standing at the front.

On a day when it looked highly likely that my footy fix would have to go on temporary hold, Tetney Rovers Football Club came to the rescue. A visit to this friendly, hard-working club comes highly recommended to all football travellers. For more details about the club and league, go to the following link: <http://fulltime-league.thefa.com/Index.do?league=396976000> where an invaluable handbook can be downloaded. The joys of watching the football in deep winter continues (just!), have fun wherever you go in the snow!

**R No.29: WebEd** - Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019; **Limestone Rangers** (v AFC Queensway); Scunthorpe & District League Division One; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Hollowgate Hill; Willoughton; Gainsborough; Lincs; DN21 5SG; Result: 5-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 22

Football has been played in the village of Willoughton for over ninety years since the formation of Willoughton Rovers Football Club back in 1927. The club first

began playing its games in a field off Templefield Road (near to the centre of the village) and originally competed in local leagues including the now defunct Gainsborough & District Football League. In the early 1950's they re-located to the present site in Hollowgate Hill and changed their name to Limestone Rangers FC. They shared the new site with the local cricket club and a new stone pavilion was built in 1953 to provide changing facilities for all teams using the facilities. Although the cricket club has been dis-banded and moved out the football club has continued to play here ever since.

It was during the 1992-93 season that the club entered the Lincolnshire League and finished in a creditable sixth place (out of twenty teams) during their first campaign at this level. The most notable success came in 1998-99 when Rangers lifted the league title (out of 19 teams) and followed this by taking the runners-up spot (out of 18 sides) the next season (behind champions Boston United Reserves who remained unbeaten throughout). They continued as members of the league for six more seasons before leaving mid-way through 2005-06 when they couldn't fulfil their fixtures and their record (14-0-2-12-7-67-2) was expunged.

Amid a period of great uncertainty for the club, they successfully applied to join the Scunthorpe & District League the following season and finished a lowly tenth (out of 13 sides) in the second division of the competition. Improvement was gradually made on the field (4/14) and with it came promotion up to the top division where they have remained for the last ten years now. During this time, they have won the league title on no fewer than three occasions: (10-11), (14-15) and (15-16) and won the league challenge cup in 12-13. The best season to date came three years ago in 2015-16 when the club won the league, finished runners-up in the league cup and were beaten finalists in the prestigious county junior cup, eventually losing 3-1 to Hykeham Town in the final.

Arriving at the club for my footy fix today, I was met by proud club chairman and former player Keith Betts who had just finished putting up the nets. He was more than happy to spend time talking about his beloved club and showing me the many old team photos (including the Lincs League title winning side from twenty years ago) which were displayed strategically on the walls of the newly extended pavilion. This lovely building, renovated in recent years, now incorporates a tea bar and lounge area. Some bench seating placed on the covered balcony outside provides a wonderful elevated place from which to watch the game and is a popular 'kop' and meeting area for home fans to gather particularly during the cold weather at this time of year.

Approaching down Hollowgate Hill the club is set in a beautiful isolated leafy location. The club name sign (affixed off-centre on the trunk of a tree) at the ground entrance leads you to the car park, pavilion and playing field, all tucked away down a short driveway. A narrow path and set of steps along the side of the building takes you down from the changing rooms towards the corner of the main (and only) partially-roped pitch. From here you can appreciate the lovely all-round verdant vista: steep banking on the right (running right up to Willoughton Hall and Limestone Farm) covers a large grassed area alongside the near touchline; a large and robust hedge hugs the goal-line at the far end and a view of the church of St

Andrew and its grounds can be found over on the left - for the avid snapper there's plenty of hopper-tunites here to capture an excellent view of the action. It's also pleasing (at this level) to see a number of colourful advertising boards in situ close to the pavilion.

Today's game saw the visit of Scunthorpe-based side AFC Queensway to Hollowgate Hill. Although both sides had lost 3-2 on their travels the previous weekend, a quick glimpse of the league table before setting off suggested that the hosts, currently sat in third place (out of eight sides) probably looked the more likely to defeat their (third from bottom) relegation threatened opponents. My hunch was right and Rangers won the match convincingly 5-1 to take all three points. The impressive Nathan Plumtree certainly wore his goal-scoring boots this afternoon grabbling himself a well-deserved hat-trick including a hotly disputed penalty late on. The game, played on a heavy pitch in biting cold and breezy conditions, attracted a crowd of about twenty, the majority of whom unsurprisingly wore several layers of clothing to combat the falling temperatures at pitch-side. I was pleased to return to the pavilion at the break to enjoy a lovely warm cuppa courtesy of the Rangers committee.

Another cracking hop. Of all the clubs I have visited so far in this league to date this has to be one of my favourites and I would recommend it to all travellers. The club can easily be reached from the A15 (Lincoln-Scunthorpe) road by taking the winding, scenic route through the sticks (signposted Kirton Lindsey and Uncle Henry's diner) following the B1205 and B1398 (by-passing Grayingham and then Blyborough) towards Willoughton. As you cover the final stage of the journey turn right off Middle Street and continue down Hollowgate Hill (into the village) for about 200 yards until the entrance becomes visible on the right-hand side of the road (just before the first house which is adjacent). The joys of hopping continue...have fun wherever you go.

**R No.28: WebEd** - Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2019; **Harrogate Railway Athletic** (v Handsworth Parramore); Northern Counties East League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: Station View; Starbeck; Harrogate; North Yorkshire; HG2 7JA; Result: 1-2; Admission: £5; Programme: £1; Attendance: 106 - REPORT TO FOLLOW.

**R No.27: WebEd** - Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2019; **Harrogate Town** (v Hartlepool United); National League; Kick-Off: 12.35pm; Venue: CNG Stadium; Wetherby Road; Harrogate; North Yorkshire; HG2 7SA; Result: 3-1; Admission: £14; Programme: £3; Attendance: 2000 - REPORT TO FOLLOW.

**R No.26: WebEd** - Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2019; **Market Rasen Town** (v GB Kitchens); East Lincs Combination Le Sanctuaire on Steep Hill Junior Challenge Cup Round 2; Kick-Off: 1.30pm; Venue: Rase Park; Gallamore Lane; Market Rasen; Lincs; LN8 3HZ; Result: 3-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 15,

If you haven't been here already, a visit to Rase Park has to be on every hopper's list of 'must-see' non-league football grounds. It really is one of those hidden gems that is found (literally) off the beaten track. However, from first impressions you would be forgiven for thinking the worst. It's location, off the rather soulless industrial estate along Gallamore Road on the western fringes of this horse racing

town, is rather out of character with the place and not one to immediately lift the spirits. Set amongst the myriad of commercial and wholesale units and the local re-cycling centre, it certainly is not an easy ground to find either. Indeed, after giving up on my satnav (which sent me the wrong way) and asking for directions twice, I eventually managed to spot the tiny entrance (with just about enough room for a car to pass down) which is set between two industrial units belonging to RPC Plastics Ltd. As you get closer you can see there is a sign post for the club attached to some of the metal fence panels but this is not clear unless you stand right in front of it!

Only a short distance from the A46, Rase Park is home to both the town's cricket and football clubs. Although part of the industrial estate backs onto the playing field this is more than compensated for by the tree-lined backdrop and the close proximity of the River Rase itself which meanders along two sides of the ground. The club pavilion (with bar and TV) and adjacent car park are found at the end of the driveway and situated on the near side-side of the park. As you look across the field you will notice the cricket square, scoreboard, practice nets and sight-screens which take up a large area on the site. The football pitch is marked out over on the far side and is about 200 yards from the changing rooms. There are some lovely views overlooking the river banks if you stand in the far corner to the right.

Pride of place here goes to the beautiful old wooden stand which straddles part of the far touchline. Dating back to the early 1970's, painted in blue and white and constructed with three wide steps, it provides ample seating and cover for at least a hundred spectators. A large board attached to the fascia spells the warm words: *Welcome to Rase Park*'. Having seen better days now the two entry points (at each end of the stand) fashioned from large breeze blocks are out of bounds and fenced off for health and safety reasons. Instead access into the stand is made by climbing through the open partitions at the back of the two dug outs that are positioned in front (the screen ends are still in place). I'm pleased to say my now rudimentary gymnastic skills and inflexible torso just about passed the test! Five separate tall floodlight poles (with two bulbs on each) are found along this side of the ground but I couldn't ascertain whether these are still used for training sessions or not. With the river running so close to the pitch members of the committee are frequently called upon to fish the ball out of the water using a special net attached to the end of a long pole.

Today the hosts were taking on GB Kitchens, a works side from Grimsby, in the (wait for it it...) *Le Sanctuaire on Steep Hill* Junior Challenge Cup Round 2 tie! Now just in case you were wondering, the competition sponsor is a health and beauty treatment spa based in Lincoln. Apparently, a full facial procedure lasting three hours there can set you back £72 or if you want to splash out more you can go for an entire top to toe massage for £95!! I should stress that this is not based from any personal experience of mine but is information that I gleaned from the company website (honest)! Back to the football. Teams from all three divisions of the East Lincs Combination take part in what is essentially the league challenge cup competition. With both sides (from the bottom division) without a win in their

respective last three games, the form book (or should that be the out of form book?) suggested that a fairly even game was in prospect.

It was the visitors (lying in second place in the table) who struck first taking advantage of some farcical defending in the six-yard box (with only 4 minutes gone on the clock). During a frantic goal mouth scramble the ball rebounded off at least two defenders before bobbling agonisingly over the line. However, once the hosts had regained their composure they battled back in some style scoring three fine goals: the first was converted from the penalty spot by Tom Robinson (22); the second came midway through the half when Nathan Smith expertly curled the ball around the wall to beat the flat-footed stand-in keeper and the third came within seconds of the second half re-start when Kieran Togher (46) beat the offside trap to slip the ball under the advancing keeper. Despite creating further chances neither side found the net again and Town won the tie 3-1 to progress into the next round (where according to the sports column of the *Rasen Mail* they will meet Division One side Tetney Rovers). The match played on a sticky surface in mainly dull conditions attracted a dozen or so spectators. At full-time I made use of the boot cleaning brushes outside the changing rooms to clear the thick claggy mud off my shoes before heading home. What a cracking and much under-rated cleaning aid this! Drinks and snacks were available from the clubhouse bar during the afternoon.

After chatting to a couple of the committee members I understand that the club was probably formed at some time during the late 1950's playing initially in local level football. The team originally used a site off Waterloo Street close to the river for about twenty years before moving here. According to the useful *Football Club History Database* pages, recent progress was made in 2011 when the club joined the Lincolnshire League from the Lincoln & District League but only remained in it for two seasons finishing in 14/17 (2011-12) and 15/17 (2012-13) before leaving in 2013. They re-joined a year later, this time completing three more seasons finishing next to bottom in each campaign: 11/12 (2014-15); 11/12 (2015-16) and 14/15 (2016-17) before leaving for a second time. It seems by many here that a drop into the East Lincs Comb is seen as a good move and could offer much needed stability at a time when resources are limited. Watch this space for more!

This had been another enjoyable day out at a really friendly club on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds. It goes without saying that a visit to Market Rasen Town Football Club and the lovely Rase Park comes highly recommended to all ground collectors and grassroots football fans alike. The joys of heading off the beaten track continues...have fun when you go down one!

**R No.25: WebEd** - Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2019; **Middleton Rovers** (v West Hull Amateurs); East Riding County League Division One; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Middleton playing field; Front Street; Middleton-on-the-Wolds; YO25 9UP; Result: 1-4; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 13

It's my first hop of the new year and I'm taking in a local county league game close to home today. My destination is Middleton-on-the-Wolds, a small village situated on the A614 midway between Driffield and Market Weighton. The ground is about 200 yards outside the village on the right-hand side of the road (if heading towards

Market Weighton). With restricted access to the playing field visitors here should park in the adjacent bowls club car park (clearly sign posted) and follow the path along the main road to get there.

The tree-lined site is the main hub for sport in the village and shares its facilities with the local cricket, football and tennis clubs. As soon as you enter the field you will notice the Middleton Recreation Club, a new brick-built multi-purpose building (used as changing rooms) immediately in front of you. To the right of the pavilion is a smart wooden cricket scoreboard; to the left are some practice nets and two separate floodlit tennis courts (used for both grass and hard court). The main (and only) football pitch here is marked out on the far side of the field beyond the fenced off cricket square in the middle. There is a noticeable diagonal slope which is really emphasised if you stand in the corner nearest to the tennis courts.

A decent game is in prospect today with Rovers currently lying in fourth place in the table (out of eleven teams) taking on joint leaders West Hull Amateurs. The visitors from Hull take an early lead but are soon pegged back when Rovers convert a penalty just before half-time. The game is in the balance until the last fifteen minutes when Amateurs start to show their class and go on to add three more goals to win the game. With joint leaders AFC Bilton only managing to earn a draw (3-3 at home to Hedon Rangers Reserves), this afternoon's victory now gives the Amateurs a two-point cushion at the top of the Division One table over their rivals. The game played on a bumpy, sticky surface in mainly dull and overcast conditions attracts about a dozen spectators. For once I remembered to bring a few snacks and a drink along with me which was a bonus as there didn't seem to be anything refreshment-wise on offer from the pavilion.

During the game I got chatting to Amateur's first team coach Brendan Smurthwaite. A Community Coordinator at the KCOM (for Hull FC) and self-confessed *twitter* fan, Brendan told me what a difficult competition the ERCL can be with no easy games and any side capable of an upset. He can't complain though with his side having lost just once and scoring more than four goals in eight out of eleven league matches played so far this season! He also mentioned that his team play its home matches on the 4G artificial surface at the Kelvin Hall School based in Bricknell Avenue in the town. That's definitely one worth remembering for bad weather!

This had been another wonderful day out and a visit to this really friendly club in the East Yorkshire Wolds comes recommended. The joys of watching local county football continues. Have a Happy Hopping New Year!

**R No.24: WebEd** - Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> December 2018; **Carlton Athletic** (v Sherburn White Rose); West Yorkshire Football League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Carlton Cricket Club; Town Street; Carlton; West Yorkshire; WF3 3QU; Result: 3-0; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 37

I'm heading west along the M62 into West Yorkshire for my footy fix once again. In fact, I'm almost covering my tyre tracks having come this way only three days ago on a Boxing Day trip to Brighouse Town FC. Today my destination is the delightful village of Carlton located on the outskirts of Wakefield which is not so far to travel

with a journey time taking just over an hour from *FGIF* HQ to get there. Although the club is found just a few hundred yards from the main village centre it has a lovely rustic feel to it.

The club is based at the well-appointed Carlton Cricket Club. As you come up Town Street you cannot fail to notice the large colourful flag hanging from the outer wall of the cricket clubhouse positioned on the edge of the cricket field. It does look quite majestic. However, as the tiny car park only has room for about four cars (literally), it's best to park along the main road where early glimpses of the football ground can be made through the gaps in the bordering hedgerow.

Although both clubs share the same clubhouse building the football club has its own separate facilities on an adjoining field over to the right. Immediately inside the entrance you will see the football changing rooms with the outer walls fashioned in white and the doors painted blue (to match the club colours). The club name is proudly emblazoned in large letters on a board affixed to the end of the facing wall. There are also a couple of plaques in situ honouring the lives of former fans too. As you turn right and climb the pavilion steps there is an absolutely breath-taking view of the ground and its beautiful surroundings (mostly rolling hills with some farmland in the foreground over to the right) which stretch out onto the horizon. You will also appreciate just how much the pitch (set down in a hollow) slopes away from one side down to the other. For the eager snapper who loves taking panoramic football landscape shots then this has to be one of the best places in grassroots football to be!

The pitch is enclosed by a neat white post and rail fence which continues around its perimeter. It's nice to see there are plenty of advertising boards in place which give the sponsors a much-needed plug. It is possible to walk around the outside but there isn't much room particularly behind the far goal where there is netting (to catch any wayward or miscued balls!) and in some places along the far touchline. The separate Perspex dug outs (each with a unique club crest displayed near to ground level on the side wall) are positioned at opposite sides of the half-way line. As there is no cover at pitch-side I would not recommend coming here on a cold, wet day unless you are wearing several layers as the setting seems to be very exposed to the elements.

Today's match saw the visit of struggling Sherburn White Rose to the Carlton CC. Before play Athletic were joint top of the league sharing the same points as Beeston St Anthony and Leeds City. However, with neither of those sides in action this afternoon there was great incentive for the hosts to win this game. Victory would not only send them to the top of the table but would also give them a crucial three-point cushion over the rivals (albeit having played one more game). As predicted the result went according to the form-book with Athletic coming out 3-0 winners and moving to the top of the WYFL Premier Division. Great credit must be given to Lee Kelsey, the visiting keeper, who had a most remarkable game saving at least half-a-dozen nailed on chances including a spectacular diving penalty save in the closing stages. He was without doubt the Man of The Match and one of the best stoppers I have seen in a while, certainly this season. Suffice it to say he is definitely one player to look out for! It is interesting to note that

although three officials are appointed for games in the top division, this afternoon's referee had travelled down to the game from Scarborough!

The match played on a slightly undulating surface in mostly lovely bright sunny conditions attracted nearly forty spectators. Although I didn't partake in them, refreshments were available from the main cricket pavilion throughout the afternoon. Although the club like the others in this league doesn't issue programmes (as far as I know - don't quote me on it), information about the league and its clubs can be found in the usual way on the FA *Full-Time* website and the ever-popular social media platforms like *twitter*.

So, another fantastic hop in West Yorkshire and another favourable impression made. This is a lovely friendly club and it goes without saying that a visit to Carlton Cricket Club comes highly recommended. Having already made a visit to watch Sherburn White Rose back in September (see R No.8 below) and judging from what I saw here today, I won't hesitate to watch more games in this league. The joys of hopping over the border. Have fun wherever you go!

**R No.23: WebEd** - Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> December 2018; **Brighouse Town** (v Spalding United); Northern Premier League Division One East; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: The Yorkshire Payments Stadium; St Giles Road; Brighouse; West Yorks; HD6 2PN; Result: 3-1; Admission: £8; Programme: 36pp, £2; Attendance: 201

After succumbing to the festive excesses over the last couple of days, I thought there could no better way to clear my head (and stomach) than by making a short trip along the M62 into West Yorkshire for this tasty Boxing Day treat. With the kick-off brought forward at the visitors' request to 2pm, it also meant I could avoid some of the congestion on a busy stretch of the motorway and get home at a reasonable hour before sampling more delicious turkey and trimmings. Apart from the last few slow-moving miles prior to leaving at junction 26, the journey was made in pretty good time and I managed to get a decent parking space close to the ground entrance off St Giles Road.

Visitors here won't have any doubts about the club colours: black and amber - indeed the whole place is decked out in this wonderful striking combination (but being a Tigers fan, I would say that, wouldn't I?!). With access through a turnstile in the near corner, the ground itself is bordered on all sides by a neat post and rail fence with hard standing on all sides. There is plenty of cover with a low roofed stand (complete with name on the front fascia) providing several rows of seating running along one side. A vibrant clubhouse (with token a Christmas tree and baubles in situ) containing a club shop, function bar and tea bar is found in a building just inside the entrance behind the goal. Beyond here separate buildings house the hospitality suite (not as posh as it sounds) and club changing rooms which are set back from the pitch at the end of a path. There are two dug outs and some low scaffolding used as a TV/video gantry along the far touchline. Some new steps of terracing have been added to the far-left hand corner (beyond the main stand). In keeping with the Health & Safety requirements I smiled at some of small notices dotted around the place which quirkily read: *Do Not Sit On The Fence*. Keep an eye out too for the mini video cameras attached to the top of luminous green posts which are positioned close to the goal lines at both ends of the ground.

Incredibly this was the club's first home game to be played in December. In fact, the last game scheduled here against Morpeth Town (on the 15<sup>th</sup>) was postponed just before the kick-off when the referee decided that part of the pitch in one corner was unplayable. According to locals it was after a freak ice storm (I'd never heard of the phenomenon either!) passed overhead just twenty minutes before the game was due to start. As you can imagine there was a great feeling of consternation and resentment especially amongst the players, staff and fans who had made the long 135-mile trip down from Northumberland to get here (oh, and then back there again)!!

Thankfully there were no such adverse weather problems today. As expected, high-flying Town went on to win a hard fought and, at times, bad tempered match by a 3-1 score-line. The result keeps them in the race for promotion along with the other title rivals Morpeth, Tadcaster Albion and Pontefract Collieries. The game played on a heavy pitch in really dull and overcast conditions was attended by over 200 spectators including a few who had travelled up from Spalding. Hot and cold snacks and drinks were available from the tea bar throughout the game. If you get chance you must try the meat and potato pie, mushy peas and mint sauce - it was certainly a cracking festive feast (but don't tell my wife that though). A decent programme which I thought was over-priced at £2, was issued for the game. Complete with glossy colour cover and 36-photocopied pages this contained most of the basics apart from a league table (I know about holiday deadlines but cannot understand why clubs fail to print this, rant over!).

After taking in matches already at Tadcaster Albion and Cleethorpes this season I must say that I really do enjoy watching games in this division of the Northern Premier League (sorry *Evo-Stik* League!). I found everyone connected with Brighouse Town FC (fans, committee members and volunteers) to be really friendly and welcoming and would certainly recommend a visit here to all football ground collectors. More information about the club can be found on both the league and club websites and on the dedicated BTFC *twitter* page (which includes video footage of each home game). Another excellent bit of festive football foray fun! Enjoy the rest of your holiday wherever you go.

**R No.22: *WebEd*** - Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2018; **Hibaldstow Wanderers** (v New Holland Villa); Scunthorpe & District League Division Two; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Hibaldstow Village Hall; Station Road; Hibaldstow; Brigg; Lincs; DN20 9DY; Result: 0-11; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 8

With plenty of pre-Christmas jobs still left to do, I (or should that be my missus) decided that it would be best not to stray too far from *FGIF* HQ this afternoon. A short trip over the bridge into North Lincolnshire was just the ticket (or the toll charge?!) as I headed down the A15 towards Lincoln before turning off into the sticks for the village of Hibaldstow (pronounced *Hibbald-stowe*).

For those with a keen interest in all things historical, I understand that the site was founded as a Roman legionary '*roadside fort*' on Ermine Street, the long straight road that joins Lincoln to the Humber. The name 'Hibaldstow' itself comes from Old English language with *Hygebald* + *Stow*, meaning a "*Place where St. Hygebald is buried*". Variations from around 1066-87 refer to the village as

"Hibaldstowa" and it even appeared in the 1086 Domesday Book as "Hiboldestou. Confused yet? You would be if I told you there are over twenty more references dedicated to this subject.

If you follow the brown information signs en-route to the village these show the words: *Hibaldstow Sky-Dive* - the place is well-known for its local aerodrome and for organising sky-diving activities and events for its members. I must confess that at my age, I much prefer to keep my feet firmly on the ground these days! Talking of which - this one is found about two miles from the A15 turn (which is also about 5 miles from Brigg and the M180) and is located on the right-hand side of the road behind the village hall, just off Station Road.

However, as I arrived there just after one o'clock (as indicated by the striking wall clock on the side of the hall), the place was completely deserted and I immediately feared the worst: there were no other cars parked up and the goal posts were also lying flat on the grass - maybe both teams had mutually agreed to postpone the game until after the holiday period? Who could blame them? After climbing out of the car, I noticed someone (over to my left) going into the village hall and so hurriedly followed them to find out what was happening (or not). Thankfully, my angst was only to be short-lived and the kind gentleman (who just happened to be the caretaker of the site) reassuringly confirmed that the game was definitely on, after getting the thumbs up from the first team manager at mid-day!!

The leafy site which shares with the local cricket club is self-contained. The cricket facilities (square, covers and sight-screens) are found over to the left-hand side of the field with the main football pitch (un-roped) running lengthways down the right. This is bordered by a children's play equipment area and a couple of skate ramps. Some dilapidated moss-covered tennis courts and a smaller football pitch are found beyond here on the far side. The changing rooms are housed in a separate building which adjoins the end of the village hall. A very large tree which appears in many of the photos, stands centrally in the field and dominates proceedings here.

Today's game was in fact one that had been re-scheduled from an earlier postponed fixture back in October. This had originally been called off at the last minute when it was discovered that vandals had left broken glass on the pitch, making it unplayable. Since then the hosts have struggled to find their best form and currently occupied the third from bottom place in the nine-team division. The visitors from Barton had achieved a much better playing record sitting fourth place in the table. It soon became clear that Wanderers were going to find the going tough this afternoon having just managed to scrape a bare eleven players (with two late-comers arriving with only seconds to spare ahead of kick-off) for the game.

As predicted, it was Villa who were celebrating Christmas early having won the game easily by a more than comfortable 11-0 victory. Incredibly after the home keeper came off with a leg injury on the hour mark (with his side already 9-0 down) the team seemed to perform better with ten men and the stand-in keeper managed to concede only twice in the remaining fifteen minutes! Notably Ben

Murray and Chris McConnell were the star strikers scoring five and three goals respectively for their side. The game played in beautiful bright sunshine on a bumpy, claggy pitch attracted eight spectators including Gordon, an affable seventy-seven-year-old hopper who had travelled over to watch the game from his base in Leeds. He not only recognised me but he also remembered meeting my late-father in law Eddie on a trip to watch Newmarket Town FC back in the early 90's. How surreal is that? I also got chatting to the local cricket club chairman who had popped down to check his beloved square. He told us that the football club had returned to the Scunthorpe League before dropping into Sunday football a couple of years back. Maybe judging by today's performance, they could be heading straight back again! For those who fancy a game in this competition, details of the league, its clubs and match day stats are all available on the Scunthorpe and District League *Full-Time* site.

It had been a most enjoyable day out for the football ground-collecting neutral. In fact, I was back home in time for some late Christmas shopping (only joking!). The joys of festive footy fun continue. Don't forget to check those fixtures for Boxing Day. In the meantime, have a lovely Happy Hopping Christmas!!

**R No.21: WebEd** - Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2018; **AFC Bilton** (v Haltemprice AFC); East Riding County League Division One; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Bilton PF; Main Street; Bilton; Hull; HU11 4AA; Result: 4-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 3

With the threat of strong winds, sleet and freezing temperatures in the air I didn't fancy heading too far for my footy fix today. The weather forecast in Hull seemed better than many others in the surrounding areas (where orange weather alerts had been put in place) and certainly increased the chance of seeing some action this afternoon. With this in mind I headed over to the other side (east) of the city and out towards the village of Bilton where the hosts were taking on Haltemprice AFC in an East Riding County League Division One match. Thankfully as I approached along Main Street, I noticed some of the players were already out wheeling the goals from behind the village hall and onto the field. Game on!

The ground itself is found on the left-hand side of the road (just past the large ASDA superstore). It is pretty basic and fairly typical for this level of football. The playing field is enclosed by tall trees and a deep ditch which run along the far side. There are some training lights and a children's play area at opposite ends of the village hall on the near side. The main club changing rooms (which are not immediately visible) are tucked away in the right-hand corner hidden from view by the well-appointed British Legion building which backs onto the field beyond the car park. A small sign affixed onto the outside wall reads: '*This club participates in the taking of photos and cam-cording*' which is encouraging news for the roving snapper. It's only a short walk from here to the main un-roped pitch which runs parallel to the main road. Interestingly there are some old unused rugby posts still in situ that stand offset to the football goals - no doubt the site was once used by a former rugby club who shared the pitch. There is no cover or dug outs at pitch side.

AFC Bilton came into today's league game on the back of an impressive five match unbeaten run making them (on paper) a difficult side to beat. However, it was Cottingham-based Haltemprice who opened the scoring following a goal mouth scramble inside the first ten minutes. Following relentless pressure, the hosts managed to draw level after the ball was bundled over the line by a visiting player from close range. Bilton took control soon after the break and scored three times before Haltemprice grabbed a late consolation penalty in the dying seconds to make it 4-2. The deserved victory elevated the hosts to joint top place in the league behind West Hull Amateurs FC. I feel that credit must go to both teams and referee Peter Sugden who coped admirably in what were extremely difficult conditions: the cold biting wind was so strong at one point that it even made the corner flags buckle over at a forty-five-degree angle to the pitch. Committee members were also kept busy having to 'fish' the ball out of the ditch using a special adapted long pole and net, several times during play. A crowd of just three (my lowest of the season so far) was in attendance - in fact I got to know each of them on first name terms before the end!

During the game I also spoke to committee man Jamie Tune who has been with the club for over fifteen years. He told me that they had been founded originally by John Wilson who coached the players. The side played under different names including Jeffs FC, Longhill Ravens FC and more recently Apollo Rangers FC who achieved notable success in winning the ERCL Division Three title last season losing only one game throughout the entire campaign. After a re-brand the club has changed its name to AFC Bilton this season with the aim of giving it greater identity within the local catchment area and community. I must also express my thanks to Aaron McIver, a self-confessed Rangers fan, who helps to edit the club's *twitter* feed and for offering me a warm welcome when I arrived at the ground before kick-off.

Despite the bitter wind-chill it had been another cracking day out watching non-league football on the Banks of the Humber. I was interested to find out later that the crowd for the Hull City v Brentford game played this afternoon at the KCOM was only 10,530 - the lowest ever attendance for a league game played at the ground. It's certainly reinforced my love for grassroots football. Have fun wherever you go.

**R No.20: *WebEd*** - Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018; **Beverley Town** (v Pocklington Town); Humber Premier League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Norwood Recreation Ground; Norwood; Beverley; HU19 9HW; Result: 4-3; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 32

Travellers may be interested to learn that Beverley Town Football Club has now returned to the Norwood Recreation Ground in the town. Following problems over the poor state of their pitch (amongst other things) the club was forced to move out and play its home matches on the playing fields in the neighbouring village of Hutton Cranswick, some ten miles away. It was in partnership with the cricket section of the club that four separate grant applications from *Sport England* and East Riding of Yorkshire Council were successful allowing an extensive programme of works to be undertaken and necessary improvements made.

The first development was to erect a new second changing facility and refurbish the existing main changing rooms providing more space with the addition of shower facilities for its members. The project which started in 2014 was funded by a £75,000 grant from *Sport England's* Inspired Facilities Fund and £47,000 from East Riding of Yorkshire Council with the work completed (within budget and on time) by April 2017. At this time the football pitch was also in dire need of improvement with massive variations in the levels of the playing surface caused by furrowing which rendered it literally unplayable. Work instigated by the Institute of Groundsmen in partnership with the East Riding County FA assessed the football pitch and surrounding field which culminated in successful bids with awards of £75,000 from *Sport England's* Protecting Playing Fields Fund and £65,000 from EROYC granted so that remedial action could begin. In August 2017 the pitch was re-laid and new drainage installed. Despite the very wet weather last winter followed by a very dry summer this year, the contractor *Chappelow* managed to finish the work and produce a pitch which has recovered very well and now looks fantastic.

After a period of eighteen months, the football club played its first game back on the ground when Westella & Willerby were the opponents for an East Riding County Senior Cup tie back on 10<sup>th</sup> November. Amid great celebrations the day was marked by a mini-game during the half-time break with a raffle offering a range of prizes including: an England shirt signed by Joe Hart; a watch donated by one of the local jewellers; a meal for two at a pub in Beverley; a replica BTFC top and a one-month gym membership at a local sports and leisure centre. Although the visitors won the game, over one hundred spectators were in attendance to mark this special occasion which is really encouraging for the future.

After a week of heavy rain particularly over the last few days I was heartened to read a tweet on the *Official Beverley Town FC* feed which confirmed not only that their game today was definitely on but also that the pitch was in excellent condition. Despite the constant rain still falling that was enough to persuade me to get my stuff together and head over to the Norwood. There was also the added bonus of a top of the table clash with Town in third place taking on league leaders Pocklington Town for a much-awaited Humber Premier League fixture.

I wasn't to be disappointed either as the game turned out to be a terrific contest and a great advert for the HPL Premier Division. With only ten minutes left the hosts went 4-1 up and looked to be cruising before the visitors hit back with two goals (the last coming in almost darkness) to add plenty of excitement right up until the final whistle. Referee Gary Fletcher-Tindall (who was under the watchful eye of an assessor) along with his two assistants had a terrific game. He was both firm and fair and allowed play to flow freely at all times. The game played on a beautiful well-manicured surface, showed no signs of waterlogging or cutting up despite the showers (some heavy) which passed over at regular intervals during the afternoon. A low crowd of about thirty was in attendance, rather disappointing but understandable due to the miserable weather and no doubt affected by many who had gone Christmas shopping instead. At pitch side today was fellow hopper Steve Broughton who had travelled over from Manchester - check out his excellent blog and report from the game at: <http://stevebthegroundhopper.blogspot.com/> .

Although the club doesn't issue programmes (there are no issuers in the HPL), hot drinks and snacks were available from the clubhouse - amazingly one of the stewards Caroline used to live in Newmarket before moving north a few years back. What a small world!

To reach the ground follow signs from the town towards Hornsea by travelling along Norwood using the A1174. The main entrance (sign posted The Beverley Cricket and Recreation Ground) is found down the rather narrow Recreation Park Lane which is about 250 yards before the main railway crossing on the left. This leads up to the cricket pitches, new pavilion and scoreboard on the left with the main football changing rooms and clubhouse on the right. Although they look to be housed in a long self-contained building, they do in fact have separate entrances. Further along are some squash courts set at an angle from the drive. The football pitch which looks impressive is set at a perpendicular (going across) at the far end. It is bordered by some residential housing from the neighbouring estate and some trees to give it more of an enclosed feel. This is bordered by open grass standing at each end with part perimeter rail fencing and rope on the near side and more substantial railing on the opposite side where the dug outs are in situ. There's plenty of advertising along here as the club promotes its sponsors. A set of training lights are in position too but given their appearance look as they might not be used any more.

The club is certainly ambitious, having a keen interest in moving up the football pyramid. I was told by one of the club members that they have received planning permission to erect a 54-seater covered stand which could be in place (alongside the squash court) before the end of the year. This will be dedicated to Ivan Usher, a well-known PE teacher and gym owner from the town who impacted many sportsman's lives. His son Greg and wife Hilary have worked tirelessly to raise money to fund the stand which has also gained support from the ERoYC with £10,000 already in place for the project. Together with the talk of raising funds for floodlights, the improvements to the club as a whole form a solid foundation of ensuring a good football facility is available in the town for years to come and ensure the longevity of the club - incidentally there is also a wide junior programme in place which attracts youngsters from the local area and beyond. Let's hope they continue to achieve the success they deserve. As they say: watch this space for more!

**R No.19: WebEd** - Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018; **North Thoresby** (v Scamblesby); East Lincs Football Combination Division one; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Church Lane; North Thoresby; Lincs; DN36 5QC; Result: 1-0; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 11

As every hopper will tell you it is always prudent to have a Plan B up your footy anorak sleeve, just in case things don't work out the way you want. Well today turned out to be just one of those days when all my pre-match organisation and preparation really paid off big time (which for me is saying something!). Despite the heavy incessant rainfall lashing down on the Wray-mobile, I still managed to negotiate the narrow winding roads into North Lincolnshire and arrive in good time for my chosen game between Tetney Rovers and Moulton Harrox who were playing

in a Lincolnshire Junior Cup third round tie. However, as I drove past the playing field and pulled up into the village hall car park on Humberston Road it soon became apparent that the game had been called off, probably as a result of the bad weather. Apart from a couple of youngsters having a kick-about in one of the goal areas, the entire place looked completely deserted.

Now normally at this point I would start to panic, feel sick and be consumed with irrational thoughts. In the words of eminent sports psychologist Steve Peters my 'inner chimp' would be taking over telling me that I had blown my chance of watching a game and I might as well pack up this nonsense and go home. But today was (uncharacteristically) different. Instead I reacted calmly and reached over into the glove box, pulled out a small piece of paper and looked carefully at the text which revealed the post code of my next possible destination. I patiently typed the pencilled script DN36 5QC into my trusty *SatNav* and was soon on the move again heading for my back-up game at North Thoresby, a neighbouring village. According to the numbers displayed on the mini screen the ground was only five miles up the road and less than ten minutes-drive away. As the playing field appeared, I was delighted to see that the players were already out warming up and felt reassured that this afternoon's footy fix was firmly back on track. Don't you love it when a Plan B comes to the rescue? Phew!

North Thoresby is a small village in the East Lindsey district of Lincolnshire. It is situated between Louth and Grimsby, being approximately eight miles from each. The ground off Church Lane is not easy to find though. After passing the last few houses the road suddenly becomes a bumpy, potholed and unmade track, immediately giving the impression that you are coming towards a dead end at any point. Luckily, I persevered and after another 200 yards the playing field came into view on the left-hand side and, by coincidence, I could then see the opposite end where it joins the main road at the junction with the fast moving A16. The facilities here are extremely basic to say the least. In total they consist of a couple of shabby and rather old-fashioned portacabins which provide changing accommodation for both teams and officials in one and toilets and equipment storage in the other. Notably, the club name sign sits proudly on the outer fascia which doubles up as a narrow veranda where a small wooden bench seat is placed on the concrete paving slabs beneath it. And that about sums it up really although I did smile when my polite enquiry as to the whereabouts of the toilet was met with the reply (by a visiting player) who quipped: 'Anywhere you like here mate!!'.

Club stalwart and current secretary (amongst other jobs) Dave Bedlow has been with the club for more years than he cares to remember (at least forty I reckon). He explained that the club, formed just after the Second World War, used to play at two other grounds close-by before moving here about twenty years ago. He said that efforts have been made recently to stop mindless vandals from driving erratically over the pitch and leaving a series of rutted tyre marks in their wake. He remarked that it's a hard job to police this vandalism despite placing a warning sign near the first entrance. He also pointed out the difficulty in raising teams each week even though he has over forty players signed onto his books from the start of the season many haven't been seen for dust since. When the subject about Tetney Rovers (also in this league) came up in the conversation he told me that

the club had apparently been having problems with their pitch too and had been known to change the venues for their matches at the last minute.

Today's match saw the visit of Scamblesby (a village near to Horncastle) to Church Lane for an East Lincs Football Combination First (top) Division league fixture. In fact, with both teams occupying the bottom two places before kick-off this could be described as the proverbial basement battle! In fact, the match turned out to be a pretty even end to end contest with plenty of chances created throughout. The only goal of the game came within seconds of the re-start when Garry Drewit (46) slid the ball under the keeper from close-range to give North Thoresby the lead which they managed to hang onto and earn three really valuable points in their efforts to avoid relegation. Scamblesby (dressed in a garish bright orange kit) may count themselves a tad unlucky not to get a point when they thought they had scored inside the opening ten minutes only for eagle-eyed referee Paul Cole to rule it out after spotting some pushing in the area during the build-up play. The game played in damp squally conditions on a very bumpy, rough surface attracted just over ten spectators. As expected, neither refreshments or programmes were available for the matches. For those travellers who fancy watching matches in the ELFC, details covering all fixtures, results and tables (as well as a downloadable league handbook including contact info) are available at the dedicated *FA Full-Time* site by clicking [here](#)

On my way home, I reflected over the day's events. Although this had not been my intended destination, my short visit to North Thoresby Football Club had been a most enjoyable one and provided an unexpected bonus particularly on an afternoon that could have been so different. As for Tetney Rovers FC, I discovered later in the evening that they had in fact played their cup game after all, having beaten Moulton Harrox 2-1. The club secretary told me (over the phone) that the game was switched to the neighbouring village of Fulstow (a couple of miles away) after the match referee had deemed the pitch unplayable not because of waterlogging but over concerns about some large cracks in the goalmouths, a problem apparently caused by the heatwave in the summer. Now who would have thought that? Ah the joys of watching back up football matches continue. Have fun wherever you go and remember to have a Plan B, just in case!?

**R No.18: WebEd** - Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2018; **Immingham Town** (v Wyberton); Lincolnshire League; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Blossom Way Sports & Social Club; Blossom Way; Immingham; Lincs; DN40 1PH; Result: 1-2; Admission: £2; Programme: 16pp, £2; Attendance: 45

Immingham Town Football Club was founded just before the First World War started in 1912. Competing in many local leagues it continued to flourish for over fifty years before folding in the mid 1960's. It was re-established a few years later and achieved notable success in the Northern Counties East League, FA Vase and FA Cup in the 1980's and 90's. During this time the club developed its Woodland Avenue ground (including floodlights) but sadly couldn't sustain itself and folded once more at the end of the 1994-95 season. The ground sadly fell into disrepair and a fire years later saw the clubhouse burnt to the ground becoming an eyesore and a major loss to the community. After a break of twenty years the club re-

formed once again in 2016 and joined the Lincolnshire League playing home matches temporarily at the Immingham Sports Complex off Lydford Road in the town. In their first season the club finished in the top half of the league (seventh out of fifteen teams) and won the Supplementary Cup competition beating (by coincidence) Wyberton 3-2 in the final played at Eslaforde Park in Sleaford. Last season the club finished in seventh place and went on to claim more silverware by beating Horncastle Town 2-1 in the league Challenge Cup played at the Hawthorns (home of Brigg Town FC).

It was during a chance meeting with hopping supremo and Winterton's finest footy traveller Martyn Girdham (or Martin with a 'y' as I call him) a few weeks ago I learned that the Pilgrims were on the move once again. Martyn explained that the club was now playing its home games at the Blossom Way Sports & Social Club close to the town centre. Having only attended the club for a league match at the Immingham Sports Complex towards the end of last season (on 17/02/18 v Ruston Sports, 2-2), this came as quite unexpected news but was non-the-less music to my ears!

The Blossom Way Sports and Social Club located off Pelham Road is a really well-appointed venue for football at this level. Established in 1961 the club has a well-maintained sports ground catering for football (all age groups) and cricket and has terrific indoor facilities that offer a function room, main bar and snooker hall hosting regular social events and concerts throughout the year. It is well sign-posted from the main roads which lead up to the main gate and club entrance and there is an ample car park on site. Access for football is around the back (to the left) where a small wooden pay-booth (for admission and programmes) in the corner takes you to the playing field on the left and the club buildings including outdoor terrace area to the right. The enclosed venue boasts some beautiful well-manicured pitches with a fenced off cricket square in the centre, smaller junior football pitches to the left and main roped off pitch marked over to the right. The changing pavilion is housed in a separate block in the corner with a couple of ropes arranged to form a player's tunnel as the players make their way onto the pitch. A small portacabin is positioned close-by to store the ground maintenance equipment. At the moment there are no dedicated dug-outs or spectator cover at pitch-side. Keep an eye out too for the unmistakable club banners fashioned in red, black and white which are proudly attached to the perimeter rope.

The game was a very close end to end contest with the visitors from Boston just edging proceedings by a 1-2 score-line. Wyberton took the lead on the stroke of half-time when Patrick Kacirek (45+1) tapped home from close range with Ben Jaques (60) doubling his side's lead on the hour mark after turning the ball home through a crowd of players following a goal mouth scramble. The Pilgrims managed to grab a reply late on through Daniel Simpson (89) to give his side hope but they couldn't find an equaliser in the dying minutes. The match was played in mainly dull conditions on a terrific surface and attracted almost fifty spectators including the vociferous ITFC ultras who made themselves heard (more audibly particularly as the alcohol in their blood rose!). A superb 16-page full-colour programme entitled *The Pilgrim* was available from the pay-booth for £2. I had only just bought my copy when cheerful editor and social media officer Hollie Mettam asked

me to give her feedback and any ideas for future copies - now that's great marketing. The content is beautifully arranged and covers a welcome from the Chairman; news and stats covering both the ITFC first team and reserves; matchday info about today's teams; previous match reports and colour photos taken by club snapper Lewis Smith. To be honest this contains everything you would expect apart from a current league table (something I do like to see). Refreshments are available throughout the afternoon from the club bar.

I really enjoyed my afternoon here and found everyone at the club to be very friendly. I would definitely recommend a visit to The Blossom Way Sports Club to all football travellers. More details about the club can be found on its own website, *Facebook* and three separate *Twitter* feeds which cover both sides and a dedicated one for matchday photos. Thanks once again go to Martyn for his tip off about the club move and in pointing me in the right direction. The joys of ticking off another ground in North Lincolnshire continues. Have fun whenever you go there.

**R No.17: WebEd** - Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2018; **Holme Rovers** (v Hodgson AFC); East Riding County League Senior Cup Round 2; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Holme-on-Spalding Moor Playing Field; Main Street; Holme-on-Spalding Moor; East Yorkshire; YO43 4EN; Result: 3-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 24

My hop today featured a relatively local knock-out match in the East Riding County League Senior Cup, a competition involving teams from the top two divisions of the league with Holme Rovers FC (from the Premier Division) taking on Hodgson AFC (from Division One) in a second-round fixture. Based on current league form it looked more likely that the hosts, sitting third in the higher division, would be favourites to beat their opponents who were struggling in the division below.

And that's exactly how it turned out, with Rovers winning comfortably 3-1 to book their place in the next round, the quarter-final stage. After scoring in the opening few minutes when Matthew Wright (5) rifled in a spectacular shot from all of 30-yards, the hosts then added two more in the second half through Scott Steels (60) and Nick Cage (80) before Hodgson's (a company team from Beverley) grabbed a late consolation goal with Richard Durham (88) stabbing the ball home from close range. The match, played in glorious sunshine throughout on a surprisingly well-manicured surface, attracted over twenty spectators.

The football club is located in the quaintly named village of Holme-on-Spalding Moor. Looking at historical references the word *Holme* is of Danish origin meaning *island* and the Spalding Moor was a marsh, dominated by a single hill consisting of *Keuper marl* (lime-rich mudstone) upon which a small church was constructed in the 13th century. It appears then that the village was built on the *holme* around the church, hence the name. Through the 17th and 18th centuries, the main occupation for people in the village was growing and dressing hemp. This gave rise to it sometimes being referred to as "Hemp-Holme".

Based at the memorial hall and local village playing fields, the club is located just off the main High Street. To get there take the A614 (Shipton Lane) at the Market Weighton roundabout on the junction with the A1079 (Hull to York) road and follow

this for about four miles before coming into the village. The hall is found just past the shops on the left-hand side and is set back from the road beyond the main car park. A small entrance over to the right leads to the Sports and Social Club where a range of food and drinks is served in the smart lounge bar and function room. To get to the playing field at the back take the path alongside the children's play area at the opposite end.

From here you can see a smart brick-built changing pavilion positioned on the left of the large enclosed field. Built as recently as 2015, the pavilion (funded by the *Football Foundation*) with its neat veranda, displays the club name which sits proudly on the outer wall. There is also a small framed photo to honour Gary Young who sadly passed away as a young boy here in 2002, affixed to the wall at the back. There are two full-size pitches (separated by a smaller junior pitch) marked on the site. This season the club have moved from the main top pitch (nearer to the memorial hall) after experiencing problems with the surface (apparently caused by chaffer-beetle grubs which attack the surface) and are now temporarily using the other slightly smaller (un-roped) one at the far end of the field. I was told that they hope to be back on their old pitch again by March next year when all the remedial work has been carried out. In the meantime, the set of perspex dug outs normally used by the coaches and subs, sit by the side of the field next to the equipment storage unit, waiting to be rolled out again when the time comes. According to the club website the football club has also been trying very hard over the last three years to lease another field adjacent to the playing fields and make it into a car park but the owners of the land, the HOSM Relief in Need and Education Charity, have set demands which the club cannot meet and at the moment the club cannot progress in the matter.

Founded in 1922, the club was established by local residents. It gained notable success taking the York Football League (top division) title during the 1962-63 season before moving across to the East Riding County League where it won the Senior Cup in 2007. More recently the team was victorious in the ERCFL HE Dean Cup beating AFC North by a 3-2 score-line in the final played at Queensgate (home of Bridlington Town FC) in May 2016. It now runs over eleven teams ranging from tiny tots (four and under) through the junior age groups right up to adults. The second or reserve side are also members of the East Riding County League and currently play in the second division of the competition. Information about the club can be found on its own website, *Facebook* and *twitter* on-line sites. as well as the generic *Full-Time* pages covering the league.

In more ways than one it had been another lovely day out in this beautiful part of the world. I just wonder now its mid-November how long this unseasonably mild weather can continue? Now I've tempted fate, I reckon it's time to get the anorak, gloves and woolly hat ready now for what lies ahead. Have fun wherever you go!

**R No.16: *WebEd*** - Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018; **Heslerton** (v Wilberfoss); East Riding Junior Country Cup Round 2; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue; Heslerton Sports Club; Sands Lane, West Heslerton; North Yorkshire; YO178SG; Result: 5-4; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 14

Another Saturday, another mouth-watering cup tie. I'm heading further north today with my chosen destination the Heslerton Sports Club, a venue which is not too far from the North Riding Forest Park and Moors. A stress-free scenic itinerary by-passing Beverley, Driffield and Sherburn takes just over the hour and as the elevation increases there's plenty of climbing for the trusty Wray-mobile to contend with, especially in the latter stages of the journey. The village of West Heslerton (the name is derived from: '*Farmsteads where hazels grow*') is located between Scarborough and York and is found just off the A64, some seven miles east of Norton. It's a lovely, remote setting too, with rolling hills on all sides providing an idyllic backdrop to the action.

Heslerton Football Club plays its games in the Beckett Football League which, to be honest, is a competition I knew very little about until quite recently. The league which has two divisions containing only nine clubs in each, is sponsored this season by *Newitts*, the sports goods wholesaler from York. It has its own website with links to the generic *Full-Time* site and like many others has a social media presence through dedicated *twitter* and *Facebook* online sites. Most clubs are located within an area stretching from the towns of Norton, Malton and Pickering in the west over to the outskirts of Scarborough in the east and up into the North York Moors. For some of the sides like Lealholm FC, current Division One leaders, based near to Whitby and Filey Town Reserves, on the headland close to Bridlington, who are both stuck out on a limb, there is more travelling to do than most. Despite playing their games in the North Riding, Heslerton FC is actually affiliated to the East Riding County FA, hence their place in the ER Junior Country cup draw.

The Heslerton Sports Club was established after the Second World War in 1947 when the Dawney family, owners of the West Heslerton Estate, offered some of their land to be used as a sports field and provide facilities for both cricket and football. At the time cricket was the predominant sport (dating back to 1886) when a club was established with teams playing on a number of fields on the estate before finally settling on the present site at the turn of the century. The cricket club has evolved as one of the most successful in the Scarborough Beckett Cricket League (administering cricket in this area of North Yorkshire). A football club by contrast, was formed later in 1925 (as evidenced by some of the memorable archived photos in the HSC website gallery) and has grown significantly over the years so that it now boasts three senior football teams and four junior teams within its ranks. Heslerton Sports Club is a most proactive organisation, with plans approved by Ryedale District Council for the addition of two tennis courts, 5-a-side and netball facilities and the erection of additional floodlighting in the near future.

The Sports Club is reached by turning off the main A64 carriageway and heading down the narrow Sands Lane. The entrance to the ground appears on the right where a small ramp leads up to the car park. It's a short walk from here towards the sports field situated directly behind the well-appointed two-storey brick-built clubhouse. This modern L-shaped building with its distinctive tiled roof was funded and opened by Ryedale District Council and North Yorkshire Council in July 2008. Today it caters for both football and cricket teams offering four changing rooms

and toilets at one end and a small function room at the other. Chairs are strategically arranged making it easy for spectators to view the action at close quarters through the windows. A wall mounted cabinet proudly displays an impressive large number of cups and other trophies awarded to the club. The floor upstairs is used by the cricket teams with access to a rather unique elevated scoreboard which is attached onto the gable in front of the pavilion.

The playing field which has a marked slope dropping down from left to the right is fully enclosed by hedges and fences on three of its sides. A number of storage equipment units, cricket pitch covers, practice nets and a roller can be seen dotted around its perimeter at selected points. The well-manicured cricket square (fenced off) is located in the centre of the field with a number of smaller mini pitches used by the thriving junior football section marked over on the left. The main un-rope first-team football pitch is situated immediately in front of the Sports Club over on the right and runs parallel to Sands Lane.

Just before kick-off I'm introduced to first team manager Dean Storry (or Deano as he's affectionately called around here) who has just finished his warm up with the players. He tells me a bit more about the club and league revealing that several of his players prefer to travel here from Scarborough rather than play for a local team in the Scarborough & District League. Indeed, in recent seasons many clubs have moved over to the Beckett League which they feel is a superior competition in terms of organisation and standard of football.

This afternoon Wilberfoss FC (third place from bottom of the York Football League Division Two) are the visitors to the Heselton Sports Club. They come here (from the outskirts of Pocklington) on the back of a convincing 5-2 victory at ERCL-side Langtoft in the opening round of the competition played last month. With the hosts gaining a bye in the last round and not finding their best form (currently next to bottom in the league one table) it's a hard result to call which adds to the impending excitement and interest ahead of kick-off.

Indeed, for the neutral ground's collector this was a terrific spectacle throughout with both sides contributing to a wonderful end to end game of cup football (literally). It was Wilberfoss who took the lead on no fewer than four occasions before Heselton went in front for the first time with twenty minutes left. Incredibly with no further clear goal-scoring chances after this, it was the hosts who managed to hang on winning 5-4 to mark what was a superb team performance. Praise must also go to manager Deano for making what was an impact substitution and the real game changer. It was Darren Clough wearing the number nine shirt who came on just after half-time to notch a cracking hat-trick (all consecutive goals including the winner) in the space of just ten second-half minutes! For the record, here are the vital match stats showing the scoring sequence: 0-0; 0-1; 1-1; 1-2; 2-2; 2-3; 3-3; 3-4; 4-4; 5-4. Phew! The game, played on a bumpy, sloping surface in mild but overcast conditions, was attended by a dozen or so spectators.

It had been another memorable afternoon's entertainment and a visit to this lovely club, with its scenic location, comes with my recommendation. On this evidence I would not hesitate watching further games in this league, details of which can be

found on both the league site and *Full-Time*. Once again, the joys of county cup football continue. Have fun on your cup travels.

**R No.15: WebEd** - Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2018; **North Somercotes United** (v Appleby Frodingham); Lincolnshire Junior Cup Round 2; Kick-Off: 1.30pm; Venue: NS Playing Field; Keeling Street; North Somercotes; Lincs; LN117QN; Result: 0-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 14

I just love county cup football, don't you? For me this is particularly exciting when it involves the so-called smaller clubs playing in competitions that are a bit lower down the pecking order. Such occasions not only provide the chance to tick off a new ground but very often throws up an 'hoppertunity to watch a game involving teams from different leagues. Today was no exception either as I made my way across the Lincolnshire Wolds and down the east coast to take in an eagerly awaited match at North Somercotes United Football Club where the home side (members of the East Lincs Combination Division One - top division) were taking on Appleby Frodingham from the Central Midlands League in a junior cup second round tie. The added bonus was also the early kick-off time which meant that (without extra-time and penalties getting in the way) I could maybe get back home in daylight and see the closing stages of *Final Score*.

Taking into account the relative status of each side it looked from a neutral's perspective that an away win would be the more likely outcome. But as we all know predicting the result of any one-off tie like this is not always that simple. If it was, we'd have all won the *Football Pools* many times over by now! To get to this stage the hosts (current leaders of the ten team ELC) had already won comfortably 7-2 at fellow ECL-side North Thoresby in the previous round played last month. On the same day Frodingham had also scored plenty of goals, thrashing Old Leake (from the Boston & District League) winning by a convincing 5-0 score-line at Brumby Hall to claim a place in the next round.

For the first time this season it was cold enough to warrant a few extra layers of clothing for my pitch-side footy fix. Having said that the game was played in glorious sunshine throughout and was a real cracker (sorry about the firework pun but I couldn't resist, it is almost Bonfire Night, after all) completely living up to expectations. For the record, Frodingham came out on top winning by 2-0, a victory which means they will enter the third-round draw with matches to be played next month. After a pretty even first-half it was the visitors who took the lead when Danny Varley tapped the ball home from close range right on the stroke of half-time. United responded well after the break and were unlucky not to grab an equaliser early on but the referee disallowed the goal, spotting the scorer had used an arm to help control the ball before slotting it home. Soon after this United went down to ten men when one of their midfield players Sam Aston saw red after making a poorly timed challenge which was borne out of frustration rather than anger. This seemed a pivotal moment and Frodingham took advantage sealing victory when sub Kyle Bennett snatched a second with just a minute of normal time left.

Although the visitors had a greater amount of possession overall this was still a splendid, hard-fought game of cup football with virtually nothing to separate both

sides in terms of skill, endeavour and chances created. A small crowd gathered at pitch side including footballing stalwart and club vice-chairman Glen Jackson who had travelled over with the visitors from Scunthorpe. I was amazed when he told me he's been a member with the club for over fifty years now, joining as a young lad when he was just seven years old. He has worked in every capacity over the years and in recent times has helped behind the scenes working tirelessly as a groundsman; programme-seller; gateman and general dogsbody! That's some achievement isn't it?!!

The coastal village of North Somercotes is located in the East Lindsey district and the Marshes area of Lincolnshire, situated midway between the towns of Mablethorpe and Cleethorpes. A surviving North Somercotes' tradition is a Pancake Race which takes place annually on Shrove Tuesday at the North Somercotes Primary School. Originally the race was run along the main street of the village, and part of the A1031. There are races for different age groups with the name of the adult winner being inscribed on a trophy. Competitors race across a field, each carrying a frying pan containing a pancake, which they continuously toss. The winner is the first to cross a finishing line with their pancake intact. Also, in August every year there is terrier racing (open to everyone in the village) which is a very popular event held on the playing fields. Finishing on a sporting note there is an annual 5 a-side football tournament also held here in mid-July over a full weekend with age groups going from Under 7's all the way up to Under 15's.

The football club, founded in 1921 just after the First World War ended, is based along Keeling Street (the main street running through the village). Although it is sign-posted, the narrow entrance opposite the *Bay Horse* pub, can easily be missed. A long and bumpy driveway leads past the village bowling green and to the well-appointed village hall where there is plenty of space for vehicles to park up. This new building was built in memory of schoolboy, Luke Walmsley, who was murdered by another pupil at the North Somercotes Birkbeck School back in November 2003. After Luke's death his parents set up a *Sports Foundation* in his memory raising over £150,000 with the view to building a new pavilion on the playing fields. This would upgrade the old sports changing area as well as creating two new full-size sports pitches and a mini soccer pitch. Work lasted seven months and was finally completed in September 2009. A plaque over the door is attached to honour his memory.

From here a short walk leads to the fields on the right which are completely enclosed by tall trees, fences and hedges. Tonight, a fireworks display was being held here to celebrate Bonfire Night. Although facilities here are rather basic there is a storage container in the corner of the field and a small stand-cum-dug out, fashioned out of breeze blocks, which is positioned behind the far touchline near to the half-way line. Sadly, this has been partly vandalised in recent months by local youths who have graffitied most of the back walls and removed some of the blocks at one end.

I really enjoyed my short stay here today and would recommend a visit to NSU to all ground collecting obsessives. If this game is anything to go by then I would not hesitate to watch more matches in the East Lincs Combination in the future.

Details of fixtures, results and tables as well as a downloadable list covering all member clubs in its three divisions can be found on the first-class *Full-Time* pages. The joys of watching junior county cup football continue...roll on round three!!

**R No.14: WebEd** - Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018; **Hutton Cranswick SRA** (v Kingfields); East Riding County League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Queen Elizabeth II Field; Rotsea Lane; Hutton Cranswick; Driffield; East Yorkshire; YO25 9QD; Result: 4-4; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 12

For many groundhoppers the East Riding of Yorkshire is an area that is not blessed with what you would call 'proper' football grounds. Within its largely rural catchment area that is bordered by a beautiful coast-line to the east, covers the Yorkshire Wolds to the north and has the larger conurbation of Hull to the south, there aren't that many top non-league football grounds which immediately spring to mind. Aside from North Ferriby United, Bridlington Town and AFC Goole, all of whom have played at a higher level but have sadly fallen on hard times over recent years, that is just about the pick of a small bunch.

Even the clubs hailing from bigger towns like Beverley, Driffield and Hessle still play along with the many village clubs in relatively smaller local leagues spread throughout the county. The introduction of the Humber Premier League nearly ten years ago has in many ways helped to form an established structure within the area and given all clubs and certainly those with ambition, the opportunity to progress up the pyramid. However, at the same time the knock-on effect has seen feeder leagues like the East Riding County League decimated, losing many of its more established clubs and being left to compete (albeit with over fifty clubs taking part in six divisions) at what in essence is village football. Most games are played each week on roped off pitches marked off in local parks or in school grounds. There is no criticism intended here - that's just how it is. After all, as a former player for Westella & Willerby FC (back in the 1970's) I honed (if you can call it that) my defensive skills in the ERCL on the Beverley Road rec in Anlaby.

Today, my visit has been prompted by one of hopping's most affable and well-respected old (or should that be young?) travellers, Martyn Girdham. The ex-Scunny programme editor who resides on the south bank of the Humber has been on the circuit for as long as I can remember, made the recommendation a couple of weeks back during a chance meeting at Cleethorpes Town FC, to take in one of the better-appointed sides in the county league. Hutton Cranswick SRA (which in case you wondered stands for Sports and Recreation Association) is based at the Queen Elizabeth II Field in the village, located some three miles from Driffield. It's a pretty rural location.

The Association was formed in 1988 to provide sporting and leisure time activities for the residents of Hutton Cranswick and the surrounding area. The facilities cater for football, cricket, tennis and archery with its 14-acre field leased from the Parish Council. Since 2008 the clubhouse has been re-furbished with financial help from the *Football Foundation* and the Parish Council. The pro-active committee has also raised cash from many fundraising events helping to decorate community rooms and changing rooms. The playing fields have benefited from regular maintenance and the football club recently purchased two sets of posts, replacing

the old ones damaged by rust and wear and tear. The local cricket club have relocated to the fields because of the new facilities and a new square has been laid. The five floodlit tennis courts and two astro-turf areas have been regularly serviced and upgraded to ensure continued evening use. Interestingly, the Archers of East Riding have set up on the site and which is now one of the largest flat archery strips in the county. They host Yorkshire competitions and now have two junior members attending England training courses in the ranks.

To reach the SRA turn off the main A164 (Beverley-Driffield road) and make your way along the leafy Rotsea Lane. A driveway with a smart welcome sign (partly hidden by the overhanging branches) leads to a large car park with sprawling playing field which is fully enclosed around its perimeter. To the right is a wonderful low roofed pavilion complete with a long veranda stretching its entire length. A row of wooden bench seats and decorative potted plants are neatly arranged along here. The building houses changing rooms, toilets and a smart function area with bar and adjoining kitchen. There are two pitches marked on the playing field - the main one with two permanent dug outs and advertising boards in situ is nearest (and parallel to) the club buildings with the second pitch running at right angles on the far right-hand corner beyond the cricket square (the Reserves wearing a garish fluorescent green/yellow kit were playing Market Weighton this afternoon in an ERCL4 match, result 4-2).

Today's Premier Division game saw the hosts (in second place) welcome Kingfields from Bransholme in East Hull (in tenth) to the QEII Field. Despite the strong swirling breeze both teams adapted well and contributed to what was a terrific spectacle, making it a superb advert for county league football. In a high-scoring game the lead changed hands no fewer than three times. With only stoppage time remaining and Kingfields leading 4-3, it looked as though the visitors would take all three points. But in keeping with the rest of this unpredictable match Cranswick were awarded a penalty with the stop-watch set at 90+3 minutes. The spot kick was duly converted to make it 4-4 ending a remarkable game as the stats show: 0-1 (3); 1-1 (18); 2-1 (34); 2-2 (41); 3-2 (49); 3-3 (52); 3-4 (59); 4-4 (90+3).

The match proved to be a stiff test for referee Keiron Kant who had his work cut out particularly in the second half when tempers boiled over after a couple of hotly contested decisions. Incredibly the young official did well to calm things down following a mass brawl which resulted in two red cards (both Kingfields' subs) mid-way through the half. Although it had rained heavily in the hours leading up to the match, there was no question of any call off when I phoned to check earlier with the well-manicured pitch in excellent condition. Even though none of the clubs in the ERCL issue programmes, travellers will find a range of cold snacks and hot drinks are dispensed from the kitchen in the pavilion throughout the afternoon. In fact, the young girl making the teas checked twice to see if my cuppa was to my satisfaction. What service! The match attracted only a dozen or so spectators with fellow snapper Paul Linton from the *Wolds Weekly* also in attendance (during the latter stages as part of his busy itinerary which included visits to other local rugby and football matches this afternoon).

A visit to this friendly club comes with my highest recommendation. For more information about fixtures, results, tables and club details click on the ERCL *Full-Time* site. And finally, hoppers who follow football in this part of the world may be interested to learn that Beverley Town FC (Humber Premier League) who also play its home games here have tweeted to say that they expect to move back to their former base at Norwood in the town within the next month. Plans for a new stand to be erected next year are also been made. For more details watch this space. Have fun wherever you go.

**R No.13: WebEd** - Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2018; **Cleethorpes Town** (v Tadcaster Albion); Northern Premier League East Division; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: The Linden Club; Clee Road; Grimsby; NE Lincs; DN32 8QL; Result: 1-5; Admission: £8; Programme: £1, 24pp; Attendance: 283

I'm not quite sure if you would call it stalking but this is becoming quite a habit. It's already happened three times so far this season and I can't help myself. I am of course referring to my mini obsession of following in the footsteps of one of *FGIF's* finest reviewers, that is Keith Aslan. It's becoming a bit of a mutual joke now and I'm sure he won't mind me admitting this but it seems every time Keith takes in a game up here, I have to follow his lead and do the same. My social media savvy twin daughters would perhaps refer to such behaviour as FOMO - which I am reliably informed stands for the *fear of missing out!!* After taking in local (for me) games this season at Crowle Town Colts FC and Barnetby United FC (both following Keith's terrific reviews), it won't come as any surprise that I am heading to the Linden Club stadium, the new ground of Cleethorpes Town FC hot on the heels of our trusty scribe. In fact, it is only two weeks since Keith made his memorable visit here for an FA Trophy match against Guiseley which ended 2-2 forcing a replay. His heart-warming report which sums up the new ground and club beautifully can be read in the TT section (No.41).

Here are a few more observations from what was a fantastic day out. Although I don't recall it myself it appears that the club used to play on the same site here over twenty years ago when they competed in the Lincolnshire League. Obviously much has changed since then and in more recent times up until last season when the club played at Bradley Road, a venue rented off the council. Approaching from Grimsby town centre the ground appears on your left where a large open grassland area can be seen off Clee Road. Apart from the top of the floodlights, much of the ground is hidden behind large wooden fencing panels which surround the perimeter on the far side. As you pull into the car park (on a grassed area to the left), you notice a large sports pavilion immediately ahead of you which today was also being used for a wedding reception.

Access for football is gained by walking around the side of this building where a turnstile and pay-booth operates at the other end. A large flag complete with owl logo (club emblem) is attached to the fence. Programmes (24 full glossy issue, £1) are on sale inside the pavilion and by sheer luck I managed to obtain the very last copy. There was still half an hour to kick-off so paper-chasers beware - get there early to avoid disappointment!! It doesn't help when the hoppers in front of me in the queue bag ten copies for themselves. Surely there should be a cap on how

many you can buy? Hot and cold refreshments (a bit pricey) are also available at one end of the impressive lounge bar. With ten minutes to the start of the game it was a quick stretch back outside again and over to the pitch entrance in the near corner. Just behind here the players use separate changing rooms on either side of an enclosed annex where a short path leads onto the pitch.

As Keith rightly remarks the new ground, from first impression, looks really neat and tidy. With six floodlights in place, there is smart perimeter fence running around the pitch. I was quite amazed at the number of advertising boards on display around the ground which shows that lots of local businesses are on board here, definitely the sign of a pro-active committee. In addition, three small *Atcost* seated stands are already in situ: with one positioned at each end and the other behind the far touchline opposite to provide spectator cover. There is a path for hardstanding on all sides with two new perspex dug outs near the half-way line on the clubhouse side with a tall TV gantry/scaffolding just behind them. To round things off a new digital clock with scoreboard helps you to keep a record of the vital stats throughout the game.

Today's match saw the visit of Tadcaster Albion to the Linden Club. Sadly, on this occasion the teams entered the pitch without any musical accompaniment. Perhaps I ought to have a word or return another day to hear the striking notes from Liquidator by Harry James and the All Stars to get the full Aslan experience! I must admit that the pitch looked immaculate so hats off to the groundsman/woman who does a terrific job here. As far as the game goes, it was mid-table Albion (backed by a strong vocal support from the large number of travelling fans) who looked the better side and as expected the result went according to the form-book as Taddy won the game comfortably by a 5-1 score-line. The outcome was no surprise as many local Clee fans have almost become resigned to their fate with the Owls currently stuck rock bottom of the East Division table. Considering Grimsby Town was playing at home (v Exeter City, 0-0), the crowd approaching 300 here today was really encouraging.

As the gateman told me despite poor league form the recent good cup run (seven FA Cup games including the replay) ending at Guiseley will really help the club with an additional £20K going into the coffers for good measure! It's a win-win situation as the Owls actually own the ground here. Indeed, according to their *twitter* feed plans are in hand to add a new fifty-seater stand over the coming weeks. It was also nice to catch up with two old hopping buddies when I bumped (literally) into Martyn G (from Winterton) and Eddie (from South London) late on into the game. For Martyn this was his third game of the day having already watched Grimsby Town Youth in the morning and Cleethorpes Reserves before turning up here to watch the last thirty minutes!

It had been a fantastic day out in Cleethorpes (you don't hear that phrase mentioned too often) and I have no hesitation in giving a big thumbs up to the new Linden Club ground. And finally, it just remains for to say massive thanks once again to Keith for his inspiration and recommendation. I secretly wonder where he's going to on next his next visit to the area... The joys of hopping in North Lincolnshire continue!

**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 overcome 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; Ripplingale & Folkingham (v Louth Town); Lincolnshire Junior Cup Round One; Kick-Off: 2.15pm; Venue: Folkingham PF; Walcot Lane; Folkingham; Lincs; NG34 0TP; 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-roped 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 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 feint 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 a 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*