

TT No. 110: 05/05/05 Club/Ground Focus: *Stephen Harris* - Hanworth Villa (Middlesex County League)

Wednesday 4 May 2005; Hanworth Villa 2-0 Crown & Manor; Middlesex County League; Attendance: 50; no programme issued; Admission: Free.

My new-found (and I imagine short-lived) enthusiasm for this obscure league took me to a new ground last night; way across town and yet another that is under the Heathrow flightpath. Hanworth play on a municipal ground, shared with Marsh Rangers FC, that has three football pitches - which any day now will convert for the summer to two cricket pitches. The main pitch is fully railed and is enclosed on two sides by lines of trees giving a reasonably compact feel. There is nothing fancy like cover or hard standing, but there was talk around the touchline of plans to install floodlights and an area of hard standing in the future.

To one side is a small building containing the dressing rooms, heavily fortified against the local yobs, vandals and arsonists who seem to delight in targeting such places. Within this building, a cosy little bar and TV lounge have been created and a new paved area in front has tables and chairs with a slightly distant view of the action.

I arrived to find much wailing and gnashing of teeth amongst a small section of the spectators over the lack of a programme. Hanworth hadn't issued as technically this was a Crown & Manor home game and Manor had "forgotten" it was their responsibility despite the switch of venue. Having seen both of these sides recently I expected an interesting game with a clash of styles, and so it proved. The full name of the visitors is Crown & Manor Football Academy, and as such they fielded a cosmopolitan mix of youngsters with good technical skills but little cohesion as a team. One of my favourite players of recent years - Mathew Joseph, long of Leyton Orient and currently at Histon - is a product of Crown & Manor, but it is hard to imagine any of the current crop making the professional grade. Hanworth were a much more mature and rugged bunch and sit top of the table. Unsurprisingly, Villa dominated and won with two goals scored in quick succession in the middle of the first half. Tempers flared a little in the second half as some Manor players were accused of "play-acting", and it's true that they did have a tendency to drop like a sack of spuds at the slightest physical contact. Watching too much Champions League football on TV no doubt.