

**TT No.042: 06/03/05 Ground/Club Focus: *Dennis Woods* - Hersham RBL (CCL1)**

On Saturday 5th March, I visited Hersham Royal British Legion v Cranleigh in the Combined Counties League Division One (att. 19). The facilities at West End Recreation Ground, in Esher are very basic. In fact, the ground is simply a roped off pitch with no cover, lights or clubhouse. The pitch seemed good considering the wet weather we have had recently. The river Mole runs a little way back behind the pitch. I didn't seem any shops or pubs near the ground so don't arrive too early.

A simple 4-page programme was issued free (ask at the entrance to the dressing rooms) and no admission was taken and the club even gave away a free cup of tea at half time, how do these clubs survive. I was a bit worried that the game could become a boring one-way game, as Cranleigh were bottom of the league with 6 points from 26 matches and had already conceded 148 goals in the league. It appeared I was going to be right as Hersham RBL hit the post after just 1 minute, when the striker should have really scored. In fact, the woodwork was hit so many times during the game that I lost count. Somehow Cranleigh held on for 0-0 at half time. As the second half progressed Cranleigh got more confident and took the lead, early in the second half. Although their lead was short lived as Hersham RBL equalised within a few minutes. The Cranleigh keeper played a blinder and pulled off save after save to stop Hersham RBL taking the lead. Then with around five minutes of normal time left Cranleigh broke free and scored what turned out to be the winner. Their goal was celebrated by a mass bundle of players as if they had just scored the winning goal in an FA Cup Final. Well done lads.

I was pleased that Cranleigh had won as they have had battled so well after having such a tough season and the winner must have come as a welcome relief to them. Hersham RBL are a friendly club and it was nice to hear both benches shouting to the players to calm down instead of the usual comments you normally get from club personnel, mainly directed at the officials.

There are many different ways to travel to the ground using public transport. I opted to travel from Waterloo to Kingston and then take a bus. On leaving the train station head left towards the bus station and go to bay A12. You can then take either a bus 218 or 471. Note a return fare saves you a £1. Both buses leave every hour, although the 218 leaves at 13 minutes past and the 471 at 43 minutes past, so it means there is a bus every 30 minutes. You need to take the bus to the bottom of the hill as you leave Esher. Alight at the Princess Alice Hospice just before the roundabout with West End Lane. You can see the ground on the right as you turn into West End Lane. After the game the buses depart at 13 and 43 minutes again. Although the bus arrives back at the bus station just as the half hourly London train departs. Well you don't expect trains and buses to connect for each other do you, this is Britain after all?

