

**TT No.232: *Stephen Harris*** - Thursday 27 April 2006; Hellenic League Div. 1 (East); **Eton Wick** 0-1 Englefield Green Rovers; Attendance: 73; Admission by donation; Programme issued; FGIF Match Rating: 2\*.

Like many football followers I have been taking advantage of the spring weather to visit some smaller clubs where midweek fixtures are rarely played. One such is Eton Wick and yesterday's Hellenic fixture gave the opportunity for a lazy afternoon of sightseeing in nearby, historic Windsor (you know the sort of thing; The Carpenters Arms, The Waterman's Arms, etc..). It would probably be true to say that Eton Wick is not the smartest corner of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, but the Haywards Mead ground is scenic enough, best approached on foot across the meadows of the Thames floodplain, with clear views of Windsor Castle and the toff's college of Eton.

The football ground itself is rather more prosaic, with one fully-railed pitch in an unenclosed public recreation ground and room for a second pitch alongside - although there were no pitch markings there today. There is no hard standing, nor floodlights and only portable trainer's benches. Even the goalposts themselves were only erected after I arrived. The main attraction for spectators therefore is the modern brick clubhouse and bar behind one goal, which allowed viewing through its windows for those who wished to keep a close eye on the progress of Middlesborough's game on TV. But this building lacks any sort of attached cover and would provide little in the way of shelter in bad weather for those who prefer to watch in the open air. The weather was far from bad yesterday evening though and the crowd was able to scatter itself out along the rail.

From the very start it was clear that the visitors were more 'up' for this game than the hosts. "We're saving ourselves for next week's cup final", explained a home player rather apologetically; "Why get worked up for a nothing game like this". He has half a point I suppose. Unfortunately, the game took an unpleasant turn in the first half when an Englefield player suffered a nasty knee injury stretching for the ball and an ambulance had to be called. Fears of a dislocated knee were later downgraded to talk of torn ligaments; but a real 'sickener' nonetheless. The delay did nothing to help the lack of competitiveness of the game which limped to a rather tame conclusion via a scrambled goal which may well have been an own goal - nobody seemed to know for sure. On the upside, the evening drew non-league enthusiasts from far and wide and many a tall tale was exchanged of visits to far-flung venues.