

**TT No.260: *Stephen Harris*** - Saturday 27 May 2006: **Denny King Memorial Cup Final**; Epping 5-2 Ongar Town (played at **White Notley FC**). Attendance c.135. Admission by programme £2; FGIF Match Rating: 4\*.

For several of the regulars on the East London/Essex non-league circuit, this fixture provides an annual end of season gathering. I'd never been, but had heard all the stories of the stroll across the fields from White Notley station, the beers in the back garden of the Cross Keys, the picnics on the grass at the far end of the pitch and the tales swapped of yet another season of football travels. Always to a backdrop of glorious summer sunshine, birdsong and ice-cream. Except this year it poured and poured from start to finish, and the people who had said I would be a fool to miss the fixture were mostly conspicuous by their absence.

The crowd was apparently down on the average for this cup final, but I nevertheless counted 135, which I though wasn't bad in the adverse circumstances. Some were decidedly damp before the game even started, let alone at the end, but it is testament to what a good game it was that few retreated to the bar or to watch through their car windscreens from the far end. The two-division gap in status was not apparent in the first half - especially for anyone else like me who assumed that it was Epping playing in their customary blue shirts. By the time the penny dropped and I realised that Epping were actually the team in red, I had already been impressed by the way both sets of players had got on with the job of providing an entertaining and competitive game in the dreadful conditions. Epping finally scored on the stroke of half time and followed up with another just after the re-start. Ongar then dominated play for a while without scoring, before Epping notched a third to end the contest, the glut of goals in the closing minutes not really affecting the balance of the game.

The Oak Farm ground of White Notley FC remains as described by *Ron Jones in TT 138*; a very neat little set up for this level. With the much larger crowd in today compared to the game Ron attended, there was not enough room for everyone on the small pieces of hard standing and the lack of any sort of cover was noticed by all - the small hedge trees on the west side of the ground providing the only forlorn hope for the handful who has inexplicably arrived without umbrellas. The kitchen provided an endless stream of hot drinks at 50p a go and sausage rolls for £1. A decent match programme was produced by the Essex Olympian League and sold for £2.