

TT No.111: *Stephen Harris* - Saturday 6 January 2007; Northern Counties East; **Arnold Town** 4-1 Armthorpe Welfare. Att: 88; Admission: £5; Programme issued; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

Third round of the FA Cup day, when lots of lower division league clubs have a day off, always puts a lot of extra groundhoppers on the road. I fell into that category this year and teamed up with two other O's fans for a bargain Midland Mainline day return to Nottingham. It was another day of grim, seemingly autumnal, weather and we were worried about the prospects of play for our chosen game at Arnold Town, holding Alfreton and/or Long Eaton as backups. Arnold was on the northern fringe of the rainclouds and the ground looked very sticky indeed on arrival. Nevertheless, it got the thumbs up from the referee; a good decision it turned out as no further rain fell after kick-off and the pitch played surprisingly well.

The Gedling Road ground is due to close at the end of this season and the adjoining cricket pavilion has already been boarded up. The football area is entered through a very solid turnstile in the north west corner. Immediately inside is a small block which houses the dressing rooms, tea bar, clubhouse and toilets. The clubhouse was a very friendly place and the tea bar provided first class pie, peas and chips. To the left of the entrance is a low, blue cover behind most of the north end. This contains two rows of wooden bench seats. The east side is also mostly covered, again in blue, and houses around six steps of terracing. The rest of the ground, whilst fully railed, offers little in the way of hard standing where it overlaps with the cricket field. It was very squelchy in these distant parts of the ground, resulting in wet feet for intrepid spectators.

I have only seen three games in this league before and was favourably impressed at this game, both with the standard of play and with the clean, good natured approach of the players. These two clubs are struggling at the wrong end of the table, but produced a very entertaining game and managed it without the continuous swearing which is all too prevalent at this level in my neck of the woods. Armthorpe fielded, with a couple of exceptions, a very young side who were second best throughout. Arnold, in contrast, looked really quite good to me and their No. 9 - a loanee apparently - was the outstanding player of the game. Goals flowed and we all felt we had had our money's worth.

A highly readable match programme sold for £1 at the turnstile and it was nice to be given an up-to-date team-sheet just before kick-off.