

TT No.13: *Stephen Harris* - Monday 21 August 2006; Essex Senior League; **Beaumont Athletic** 1-1 Stansted. Attendance: 165. Admission £3; Programme issued; FGIF Match Rating 2*.

Mile End Stadium has hosted a succession of small community clubs from the local area in recent years. I have seen Tipples, Tower Hamlets FC, Crown & Manor and Sporting Bengal United play there in the past, but none of these clubs have really captured the imagination. The latest club to try their luck are Beaumont Athletic, who have made the step up to the Essex Senior League for this season. They have had a baptism of fire with three pastings in the opening three away games, including an 11-0 reverse at Burnham Ramblers. But it was all enthusiasm last night for the first home senior game in the club's history. The club were rewarded by a good crowd of 165 - the biggest in the Essex Senior League this season so far - and picked up their first point as well.

The long-running refurbishment of the stadium has finally finished, and the facilities for players are massively improved. But it is still a poor place to watch football. There is an eight-lane, athletics track which forces spectators high into the stand to obtain a decent view; but this stand is filthy, litter-strewn and full of broken seats. It is a shame that the refurbishment did not extend to this area. Worse, those floodlights which were working seemed set to dazzle spectators rather than to illuminate the pitch and large areas were in semi-darkness. To add to the discomfort, there are no proper refreshment facilities, just vending machines. On the plus side, the ground does once again have permanent and decent toilet facilities.

Stansted were last season's whipping boys in this league and looked second best here too. Beaumont made a very enthusiastic start and soon went one-nil up. Stansted equalised somewhat against the run of play in a reasonable first half. Unfortunately, the second half was a very scrappy affair with both sides constantly being caught offside and neither seeming to have the guile to beat the other's offside trap. The match fizzled out to a 1-1 draw. Still, it was the first point of the season for the new boys and I hope this helps inspire them to establish themselves at this level.

A basic programme was issued for £1 and was in good supply.