

**TT No.133: Andrew Gallon** - Tues 30th January 2007; **Eynesbury Rovers** v Yaxley; Hunts Premier Cup round two; Res: 0-2; Att: 25 (h/c); Admission: £3 (incl. 24pp programme); FGIF Match Rating: \*\*\*.

It's hard to believe Hall Road was once a rural venue, accessed only by a farmyard gate, through which the players would march after changing in The Plough pub in the nearby village. In the same way development has seen Eynesbury become part of the attractive Cambridgeshire town of St Neots, so Rovers' ground has been swallowed up by modern urban life.

What used to be fields is now a rather spartan housing estate, with two squat blocks of flats standing guard over the small, brick-built turnstile block and entrance gate. From here, there is an excellent view of the ground. Ahead is the brick and concrete main stand, with the club's name picked out in fading black letters on the overhanging white fascia. Four deep steps of terracing flank an unusually narrow, caged tunnel - the teams will never come out side by side here! There is a small directors box at the rear and twin dug-outs - extremely low slung - either side of the tunnel. Behind is a single-storey brick building which houses the dressing rooms and a social club whose souvenirs include the programme from a match against Luton Town in November 1981 to mark the switching on of the floodlights. These are masts, four per side, with three large lamps mounted on each. In front of the social club is an area of hardstanding sheltered by a rather flimsy corrugated plastic cover. Behind are the playing fields of St Neots Community College, appropriately specialising in the performing arts. The end to the right is metalled, with rougher ground and a graffiti-covered five-a-side pitch beyond used for parking. Behind the left-hand end goal is a narrow strip of grass backing on to a line of mature trees running the width of the pitch. On the near touchline sits a small stand fashioned from corrugated metal sheeting. On the night of my visit, most of it was being used as a store. Behind lies a grassed training area and more houses. Mature trees - three different species - fringe all but the main stand side in an echo of the ground's rural past and, when in leaf, must make the surroundings really pleasant. The overall impression, though, is one of the facilities being a little tatty but, as ever at this level, there are never enough volunteers to keep up with all the maintenance.

The expansion of St Neots has not, however, diluted the rivalry between Rovers and neighbours St Neots Town. "We don't go there and they don't come up here," said the gateman. This is the second attempt at completing this fixture - fog put paid to the first after an hour, with Yaxley leading 2-0. The visiting Cuckoos have struggled this season in the Premier Division of the United Counties League, while Rovers are in the top half of Division One, but not threatening promotion. Rovers, on a beautifully still, mild evening, should be two-up in the first five minutes. Scott Kingsbury scuffs a clear-cut chance but recovers to become the game's

outstanding player. Paul Knight then sees close-range efforts blocked on the line; the second

with what looks suspiciously like a hand. Yaxley begin to take the initiative but can't finish either. Adam Scotcher hits a post and Rovers' Paul Morris clears off his own goal-line. It's nip and tuck until Scott Bogusz breaks the deadlock 15 minutes from time. Simon Acton gets round the back of the defence to pick out his team-mate, unmarked 10 yards from goal, and Bogusz smashes a volley into the roof of the net. It looks like being enough to set up a quarter-final home tie with St Ives Town but, as Rovers push forward, Mark Paul makes sure in stoppage time by following up a James Picillo drive against the outside of a post.

Eynesbury's programme is worthy of a mention. It often features in the Wirral Survey top three for the UCL - and it's obvious why. Editor (and vice-chairman) Graham Mills clearly puts a lot of effort into it and to produce a newsy 24-pager for a relatively minor midweek cup tie deserves full marks. A glance at the stats page reveals Rovers are eligible to contest a staggering eight knockout competitions. After this defeat, their last hope of glory is the South Midlands Floodlit Cup.

To find Hall Road, take the A428 (Cambridge) exit off the A1, follow the Cambridge signs to the second roundabout (Tesco on a corner) and turn left. Go straight over four mini-roundabouts in quick succession into Barford Road. Turn left into Hardwick Road and left again into Hall Road, and the ground is facing you. Continue down Barford Road to take in what

remains of Eynesbury's historic heart. There is a village green, though most of the interesting buildings are closer to St Mary's church. The Plough is still going strong, on Montagu Street, a couple of hundred yards from the church. St Neots is a five-minute walk from here and notable for its handsome high street and peaceful parkland alongside the River Great Ouse.