

TT No.157: Andrew Gallon - Wed 21st February 2007; **Horncastle Town v LSS**
Lucarllys Res; Lincolnshire League; Res: 4-0; Att: 47 (h/c); Admission: Free;
Programme: None; FGIF Match rating: **.

Midweek fixtures in the Lincolnshire League are as rare as Wayne Rooney goals in Europe. Horncastle's curiously-named ground at The Wong is one of just three in the competition with floodlights - the others being Boston Town and Louth United. So, an ideal opportunity to avoid the televised tedium of the Champions League; in my book, the dullest viewing on planet football.

Rather like Horncastle itself, The Wong (a rare term dating from the time of the Domesday Book and meaning 'common land') is pleasant and orderly. Its main feature is an oblong, single-storey block housing the dressing rooms, the rather grandly-titled football pavilion (the bar, to you and me), the toilets and, courtesy of a propped shelter over a strip of concrete, the main stand. This is set back slightly from the halfway point of the pitch, which slopes appreciably towards the far touchline close to the Boston Road. A short path links the dressing rooms with the pitch and the dug-outs (proper ones, in which the occupants sit below ground level) are to the right of the halfway line. To the rear, beyond a belt of trees, is a floodlit artificial pitch and a regular grass pitch. To the left is a small car park. The only hard standing is provided by flags which run behind railings for three-quarters of the length of the near touchline. There are also railings on the top side. The rest of the pitch is roped off, with wide areas of grass all round. There are modern houses behind each goal and, beyond the far touchline, car parks and the large Town Hall building, which, until 1970, was the New Drill Hall - presumably of military origin. The floodlights consist of two large lamps mounted on each of six masts and are not, in all honesty, particularly good. They leave shadows on the pitch. Neither was this game, on a raw evening, the best advert for the Lincolnshire League. It was pretty scrappy stuff, peppered with spiteful tackling and quite unnecessary (isn't it always?) dissent between the players and towards the match officials. LSS's reserve team were poor, mustering just a couple of meaningful efforts on goal, both from outside the penalty area. The Grimsby club's goalkeeper made at least three excellent saves to keep a dominant Horncastle side at bay. A 1-0 half-time lead scarcely did justice to the hosts' early control but they pulled away after the break with a glut of goals to ensure the final score was a fair reflection of the balance of power.

I wasn't expecting a programme (I believe Caistor Rovers and Skegness Town are the only issuers in this tiny league), so wasn't too disappointed to discover nothing on sale. However, the decent size of the crowd was surprising. One can't help feeling a town such as Horncastle, throwing up reasonable attendances for football at this level, ought to be able to produce sufficient advertisers to make a programme viable. And, clearly, there are enough fans to buy one. I usually make a point of not visiting clubs who don't issue programmes but, having moved to

Lincolnshire in the last 18 months, fancied 'ticking off' The Wong after stumbling across it on a recent trip to the area. No admission charge or non-alcoholic refreshments, either. Surely the club is missing a trick or two here?

Driving into Horncastle from the Lincoln direction on the A158, go through the first set of traffic lights and over a pedestrian crossing. At the next set of lights, turn right into South Street and, after 200 yards, turn right opposite a fish and chip shop by a sign advertising the football club. Parking and the ground are ahead. Horncastle itself, built on the site of a Roman fort and formerly the venue for a famous August horse fair, has acquired a reputation as an antiques centre and is worth strolling around either before or after the game.

06/20