

TT No.28: *Stephen Harris* - Tuesday 19 September 2006; Isthmian League 1 (N); **Waltham Forest 0-0 Wingate & Finchley**. Attendance: 56; Admission: £6.00; Programme issued; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

Poor old Waltham Forest have not made a great start to the season; bottom of the table with just one point before last night and on the end of some heavy defeats to boot. Yet people keep telling me that they have put a good team together this year under new chairmanship and new management. Last night presented my first opportunity of the season to see them in action. It was an intriguing fixture between two clubs with close connections. Somebody cleverer than me could probably draw up one of those family trees and conclude that the clubs were second cousins once removed or something. The family tree would bring in Leyton FC, Wingate FC, Pennant FC, Walthamstow Pennant, Leyton Pennant, Waltham Forest, Leyton Wingate, Leyton Sports & Social and Finchley FC at the very least.

Despite low attendances, Waltham Forest have developed the Wadham Lodge ground very nicely and it now has decent covered terraces at both ends and a reasonable seated stand along the centre of the west side. The east side has just a short stretch of uncovered three-step terrace in the middle, euphemistically referred to as the 'Kop' by regulars. The ground is well enclosed on two sides by tall poplars and the complex has two other pitches, one fully railed (the home of Hale End Athletic), and a large central pavilion. All in all, a good place to watch football. The tea bar is notable for selling fresh fruit as well as the usual burgers, sausages and bacon rolls.

Despite the score-line, this was an enjoyable game. Both teams played at a high tempo, running at defences and passing the ball along the ground. Unfortunately, this did not add up to, many goalscoring, chances, the teams managing just one shot each on target in the first half. The second half saw more goalmouth action but I think both teams were let down by an over-emphasis on individual skill and long-range shooting. More of a team effort required. Many of the Forest players are from last season's very successful youth side and I would expect the team to improve as the season progresses. One impressive performance last night, from a spectators' point of view, came from the referee. He handled the game with good humour and there was little of the bad temper on the pitch and in the dug-outs which often blights games in this league. Everyone I knew in the crowd of around 85 (officially 56) seemed to have enjoyed the game. Waltham Forest produced an adequate match programme, but it was overpriced at £1.50.