

**TT No.56: Andrew Gallon** - Tues 31 October 2006; **Cogenhoe Utd** v Raunds Tn; United Counties League Premier Division Result: 3-0; Att: 70 (give or take); Admission: £4; Programme: (28pp) £1.

This Hallowe'en derby on the first genuinely chilly night of the season was more trick than treat for the neutrals at Compton Park. Cogenhoe will be happy to end a run of four straight defeats but a few more fireworks from the visitors, who were unbeaten in six league games, wouldn't have gone amiss. All the goals came in the first 41 minutes, which made for a pretty dull second half as the Cooks (Cogenhoe is, apparently, pronounced Cook-no) switched off and let Raunds back into it, without really allowing the Shopmates to do any anything particularly threatening.

Still, there were consolations. Neat and tidy Compton Park is well worth a look. Cogenhoe is a smallish village (and, down by the church, historic and chocolate box charming) perched high above the Nene Valley and the ground has a lovely rural atmosphere, despite the proximity of Northampton. Rolling fields surround it on three sides. The first thing you'll notice is the beautiful condition of the pitch - immaculately tended and prepared. The only one better I've seen this season was at Quorn. The sole stand sits astride the halfway line and contains 100 seats but beware the low headroom of the rear two rows. Accessing them is akin to clambering aboard the cockpit of a Sopwith Camel, and the many uprights supporting the roof heighten the illusion. On either side are small, covered standing areas. The club have plans to replace this stand. The rest of the ground is uncovered hard standing, surrounded by a high wooden fence. Behind the stand side is a thick hedge running the length of the pitch. Plenty of interesting photos - including some from the ground opener against Ron Atkinson's Manchester United - from bygone years adorn the walls of the smart clubhouse, which serves the usual refreshments from a hatch.

An excellent programme, too - one of the better issues I've seen from this league. Might be an idea to arrive early, though, because several of those who got there as the game kicked off missed out. Cogenhoe's top scorer, teenager Steve Diggin, scored twice - the first a cracking 20-yarder into the top corner - and Ollie Wilkinson slid the other goal in from close range after some sloppy defending. Raunds keeper Michael Freeman saved well in a one-on-one after half-time to deny Carl Holmes, while Adam Taylor (heading wide a sitter) and Daniel Thompson (a 25-yard free-kick tipped over superbly by Ricky Hughes) went closest for a disappointing Raunds side.

Cogenhoe is right in the heartland of UCL country and easily accessed via the Billing Aquadrome junction on the A45. Take the second turning signposted for Cogenhoe on the left and the ground, whose floodlights are clearly visible, is on the right. If coming from the Brafield-on-the-Green direction, take the first Cogenhoe turning on the right. There's plenty of

free, secure parking. My final impression was one of delight that a community as tiny as Cogenhoe can support a senior football club.

Match rating: Two stars (poor).

06/20