

TT No.94: Andrew Gallon - Sat 16th December 2006; **Calverton MW** v Bolsover Tn; Central Midlands League Premier Division; Res: 1-1; Att: 30 (h/c); Admission: £2 (including 8pp programme); FGIF Match Rating: ****.

I don't know how others organise their travels but I like to adopt a pet league for a couple of seasons. That way, as well as visiting all the clubs, you get to know the players, the form, the gossip and - crucially - have a context in which to place what you're watching. For the last 12 months, it has been the United Counties League, with the occasional foray into the Midland Alliance and Southern League when the calendar doesn't throw up a meaningful match. I wrapped up the Central Midlands League a year ago but Calverton, as newcomers this season, have been lurking on my 'to do' list since the summer.

It's always good to meet an old friend. The countryside in what was once the mighty Sherwood Forest is, despite its many coal mining connections, pleasing on the eye and the drive down the A614 towards Nottingham as enjoyable as I recalled.

Calverton were formed as a colt's team as recently as 1988 but have made impressive strides, running teams across the age-groups from the miners' welfare, built to serve the village pit during its relatively brief 1952-99 lifetime. They were one of the first in the country to gain FA Charter Standard Community Club status. Football Foundation cash has enabled the

club to enclose their main pitch and erect floodlights in preparation for the move up from the Nottinghamshire Senior League to pyramid football. It's a canny little set-up, about five miles north of Nottingham's city limits in a delightful rural spot approached by narrow lanes. As well as the welfare, the complex houses four full-size and two mini pitches, three dressing room blocks, two training areas and a five-a-side court. Guarding the entrance - to the welfare as well as the neighbouring waste disposal point - is a winding wheel memorial to the colliery. A plaque bears the legend: Out of

the darkness comes the light. The Bob Kinton Ground, as it's known, is nearest the welfare. New wooden fencing runs right the way round, with the pitch - in excellent condition considering all the rain we've had - surrounded by a wooden post and steel rail perimeter. There isn't, as yet, any cover but plenty of space for expansion at a later date, if required. Unusually for the CML Premier Division, there are floodlights - four slimline pylons on each side. Over to the right as you enter, a landscaped spoil heap is glimpsed across the distant pitches but the far end and near side are fringed pleasingly with

pinetrees. The only hard standing is behind the near goal, with a flagged path providing access through a gate for the players. Grass banking to the right, where the Perspex dug-outs are, and at the far end gives spectators the chance to gain

some height to view the action. To the left, is a wide expanse of grass and, beyond that, houses. High ground, topped mostly with

pinetrees, is visible in each direction and adds to the country atmosphere.

The game turned out to be a cracker. Calverton, whose form has been disappointing of late, must still be wondering how they failed to win. But Bolsover, a club also with its roots deep in the coal mining industry, defended stoutly after taking the lead against the run of play in the 25th minute when Ross Whitehead tucked away a well-struck penalty, awarded harshly for handball. Home debutant Jermaine Decraes hit a post with a close-range volley 10 minutes later but the visitors managed to hold out, even surviving a real onslaught at the start of the second half when Calverton won corner after corner. Having weathered the storm, Bolsover began to look dangerous on the break and Lee Evans was denied by the woodwork with a powerful volley in the 80th minute. Substitute Jon Dakers ensured a deserved point for 'Calvo' with a sweet finish on the turn three minutes from the end, though, even then, Martin Newman wasted a great stoppage time opening for the visitors.

The CML isn't, in my book, noted for the quality of its programmes, though league rules dictate every club must issue. Calverton's is clearly a budget production but, generally, I'm just grateful to get one at this level of the non-league ladder. Anything is always better than nothing. This go-ahead club is well worth a visit but, as the winter progresses, it would be worth remembering to take a brolly and some heavy-duty footwear.

06/20