

TT No.187: Paul Roth - Sat 9th February 2008; Kent County League Division 2 East; **Larkfield & New Hythe Wands** vs. Canterbury; Res: 0-1; Att: 60; Prog: N/A; Weather: Sunny, mild - Spring-like.

The above is my own personal record, for this season, when watching the new Canterbury City play. In the three previous matches I've seen them compete, they've always looked like winning, but today was a much closer affair, as Larkfield should have, with a modicum of luck and better finishing, at least put something in that 'A' column. Overall, though, Canterbury deserved their victory on a bumpy pitch. What a contrast to when I saw these two teams play in the league at Bridge just before Christmas, when City strolled to an easy 7-0 victory.

Larkfield, situated West of the County town of Maidstone, is a small village lying on, and bisected by, the A20. It's the sort of place that once driven through is soon forgotten. There's nothing much to describe or commend about the place, and nothing particularly to dislike about it either, I hastily should add. The surrounds are picturesque though, with the historic and beautiful village of Aylesford nearby and rolling countryside and the North Downs only minutes away. The scenic River Medway runs toward the sea here and a plethora of old gravel quarries, now filled with water, make for a wetland playground.

The football club is the jewel, to the Groundhopper that is, in the crown hereabouts. Found off New Hythe Lane, just to the North after crossing the M20 bridge, is a real delight. It's a proper football ground for starters, and boasts a big self-contained car park, clubhouse selling hot food, alcohol, tea and has two (!) TV screens, a wondrous stand painted in the clubs' colours of claret and blue, a railed off section on the far side of the pitch and a black and white crash barrier behind the near goal. It's a characterful arena. Have a look at the club's website, which has some excellent pictures of the ground.

I hadn't had to leave home until noon, giving me time to have elevenses with my beloved, and still easily giving me enough time to revisit a couple of GBG pubs in the locale. The Nevill Bull at Birling and the George at Trottscliffe (how that is pronounced Troseley I'll never know), I'm sad to say, DO NOT come highly recommended. On this glorious early Spring afternoon, it was, however, a joy to sit outside and enjoy my refreshments, as they were.

Yet another Wayne Fittall goal has earned the City-ites three more points on their stampede towards the title and that more important, promotion spot. The Larks can count themselves unfortunate too, not to have gleaned something from the match, so all in all both teams could say they had a reasonable day at the office.

Lastly, two points worth mentioning. Larkfield & New Hythe Wanderers FC don't issue a matchday programme, so that's going to put a lot of 'hoppers off for starters; a pity, as this is a very neat, compact and worthwhile venue to visit. Secondly, even after seeing Canterbury City for the fourth time this term, I cannot

get used to the club playing in maroon and white, as opposed to their famous green and white strip of yore. No matter on either count though; this was a very enjoyable afternoon sojourn to North Kent.

FGIF Rating: 4*.

06/20