

TT No.53: Andrew Gallon - Sat 8th September 2007; **Kinsley Boys** v Bolsover Town; Central Midlands Premier; Res: 0-1; Att: 51 (h/c); Admission: £2; Programme (40pp): £1; FGIF Match Rating: ****.

Another venture deep into what used to be mining country for a top-of-the-table Central Midlands League Premier Division encounter between two clubs from communities with roots buried deep in the coal industry. Some games look good on paper and turn out to be disappointing on grass but this competitive clash between two quality teams was a cracker in every respect.

CML newcomers Kinsley Boys, Doncaster Premier League champions and Sheffield Junior Cup winners last season, just missed out on a share of the spoils as a second defeat in four days stalled their bright start to the new campaign. What proved to be the only goal of an absorbing contest came in the 15th minute, Ross Whitehead glancing a close-range header past Carl Wilson after Phil Robb had outwitted Daniel Whitehead and crossed accurately from the right. Bolsover dominated the first half-hour but Kinsley finished the opening period strongly and only a stunning save, from Gareth Briggs, tipping over a voluptuous Craig Lafferty volley in the 33rd minute, kept the visitors ahead at the break.

Kinsley, with the slope and Factor 30 sun at their backs in the second half, then threw everything at Bolsover, forcing several corners during the eight minutes of added time to leave the visiting bench positively begging for the final whistle amid heroic, but increasingly desperate, defending. For the last 16 minutes, Kinsley played goalkeeper Wilson up front. Striker Sean Hammonds (deft touch for a big fella) swapped both shirts and shorts - comically - with his team-mate before taking his place between the uprights. And the gamble nearly paid off because Wilson went closest to finding an equaliser. Not the sort of zany strategy you expect to find higher up the pyramid!

Kinsley, not quite Doncaster and not quite Wakefield, is, in all honesty, not particularly attractive, though in common with neighbouring Hemsworth, the building of new houses in this semi-rural part of the world appears to be breathing fresh life into what is a one-horse village. It must be tough when the main reason for a place's existence - in this case, the pit - disappears and, frankly, it shows. Much is shabby, forlorn and seemingly forgotten. The presence of the inevitable 'enterprise zone' smacks more of hope than expectation.

The football ground is on the opposite side of Wakefield Road to a dog track, which is worth taking a look at. There's clearly money in greyhound racing because, as part of a well-appointed set-up, a new grandstand is under construction. Anyone wishing to 'tick off' both venues in one visit might like to know Saturday is one of Kinsley Sports Stadium's race nights.

Back to the football ground, which is hemmed in by houses on three sides and is accessed via a short track leading from a corner of the large, council-owned car

park. The entrance gate is to the right, beyond an alleyway dispiritingly despoiled by broken glass and litter, and next to a battered recreation area where youths were having a listless game of 'ten deads'. You enter in the south-east corner to discover a basic - but very tidy - little enclosure. There are two red-brick, single-storey buildings to the right. The nearest houses the dressing rooms and match officials' accommodation, and features a bright sign advertising all nine of the club's sponsors. The other contains toilets and storage. The only hardstanding - there isn't any cover and there are no floodlights - runs along the back of the near goal.

The dugouts, neat in whitewashed breeze block, glare at each other across a pitch which slopes appreciably towards the dressing rooms end (ie. west to east). The away dugout is on the south side and the home (oddly, rather smaller) on the north. The pitch is surrounded by a post and rail fence painted white and there is plenty of spare, carefully-mown turf to the west, north and east. The ground is enclosed by a concrete panel fence. The residents of the utilitarian semis to the west and north get a great free view of the action, and a number watch from their back gardens. To the south are lines of haggard terraces. These, I fancy, will count as affordable property. Pretty it isn't, though on a sizzling, sunny afternoon at least the prospect is colourful. Just to provide a reminder of industry's noise now largely silenced, trains rumble and grumble along the Wakefield to Doncaster main railway line on a high embankment away to the north-east.

Having handed out a few brickbats of late to the programmes in this league, it would be remiss of me if I neglected to mention Kinsley's is a decent production. All it needs is an eye-catching cover to lift it rather higher in my estimation. Canny club though, this, with all its players local lads and a small but vociferous band of supporters. I bet the confrontations between pickets and police here during the 1984 Miners' Strike were interesting. Well worth a visit, despite the less than appealing environment.

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