

TT No.54: *Stephen Harris* - Tuesday 11 September 2007; SSML Challenge Trophy; **Cockfosters** v Cranfield Utd. Result: 7-0; Att: 68. Admission £4; Programme issued; FGIF Match rating: 3*.

Having seen a 1-8 match on Sunday I felt that the goals were at last beginning to flow for me after a very dry start to the season, and a friend's suggestion that we take in this game at Dacre Fields, Cockfosters gave the promise of a whole load more. The ground is one of the very easiest to get to in the whole London area, lying just five minutes-walk from Cockfosters tube station. Nevertheless, my records show that it is an amazing 14 years since I last got around to going there. I don't think it will be so long before I am back again.

The ground has seen a lot of improvements since then, not least the addition of floodlights. It is still however quite a basic venue. It is squeezed onto a small site, wedged between two cricket fields and surrounded by tall hedgerows. It would have something of a rural feel were it not for the horribly busy road along the east side, the noise and stench of which are a constant throughout the evening. The pitch is surrounded on three sides by a post and rail fence and hard standing. The latter comes in a variety of mediums; a bit of concrete here, some gravel there and a stretch of crazy paving on the far side. The north end abuts hard up against a hedge, with no room for spectators. Most of the focus is on the narrow west side, furthest from the busy road, where the entrance, clubhouse and stand are all situated. The club is a friendly little place, boasting good beer and a stock of old programmes available behind the bar for a charity donation. In front of this is a small overhang, providing a little area of covered standing. Alongside is a highly eccentric little stand. The space available is very narrow, but the club have constructed (new this season I think) three steep rows of benches under an older, plastic roof. This was well-patronised, but we did not try it out for ourselves.

The crowd of 68 was quite good, I think, for this obscure competition and goals were clearly expected as the game pitted newly-promoted Cockfosters against habitual lower division strugglers Cranfield. Cockfosters attacked from the start, cruising to a comfortable 2-0 half time lead without really getting out of first gear. The second half saw the gradual substitution of some of Cockfosters' better players and, as can be the way in these situations, the fresh legs coming on were keen to score and impress the manager. So, five more were notched in quick succession. Cranfield kept plugging away to the end, heads did not really drop and they resorted neither to swearing nor fouling but kept trying to play the game. Perhaps the high point for their efforts was winning a late corner. In other words, I'm afraid, they were well-disciplined but not very good. In the few dull moments in the game we were able to watch pipistrelle bats catching moths under the floodlights which is something of a novelty in this polluted part of the world.

A nice match little programme was issued for £1. This had a slightly old-fashioned feel (that's not a criticism) and an excellent cover featuring photographs of the

sights of Cockfosters - the tube station, the church, a pub and, of course, the football field.

06/20