

TT No.23: Bob Davies - Sat 30 August 2008; **Halstead Town** v Stotfold; FA Cup Preliminary Round; Result: 1-2; Attendance: 103; Admission: £4 (£1 for grandson); Programme: 20pp, £1; Tea: 50p.

We wanted a game that fitted in with our Saturday night speedway at Rye House. The game between unbeaten Halstead Town of the Ridgeons Eastern Counties League Division One and the current United Counties League Champions, Stotfold, looked the best on offer in the vicinity.

I haven't visited Halstead Town for a number of seasons and looking at the map, the ground was easy to find, but as per normal the turnings I took ended up in the dead end of town centre car parks! Getting back onto the A131 and heading for Braintree we found the ground sign posted to the right and turned into Butler Road, taking the first right the road winds round some industrial units bearing left towards the ground.

The Rosemary Lane ground is dominated by a large stand that has over three hundred seats and also has the dressing rooms located within it. This is the only cover at the ground. A clubroom with bar and television is situated behind the main stand. Refreshments tea, coffee, burgers and chips are sold from the ground floor of a double-decker terrapin build to the left of the main entrance.

Although announced before the start of the game, the team listings are displayed on a blackboard on the wall of the stand as you exit the clubhouse. The programme was a glossy four-page shell with match details on the front that held a stapled 16-page insert. Well put together with plenty of facts and figures plus a crossword and good value read for £1. It was noticeable that the programme contained a lack of adverts that usually make up the majority of programmes at this level. This coupled with very few advertising boards around the ground would explain the chairman's appeal for people to get involved with the commercial side of the club in his notes. I wish them luck in this as they have foundations to move further on than their current Division.

There were a considerable number of changes to both sides and I was told by a Stotfold official that they only had half their usual side out due to injuries and unavailability's on the day. The match opened at a pace but the home side couldn't curb their enthusiasm and had a number of offside decisions on their attacking forays into the Stotfold area. The visitors slowly got themselves into the game and took the lead from the penalty spot after thirteen minutes with Paul Donnelly slotting home. The game continued in even and entertaining fashion and became a family affair on the goal scoring charts when Paul's cousin, Callum Donnelly put the visitors 2-0 after 38 minutes. As expected, Halstead put a lot of pressure on the visitors in the second period and finally, Steve Daly pulled a goal back on 70 minutes to make it a frantic last twenty. Stotfold will admit that at times they were just hanging on but hang on they did and go into the next round

£1500 the richer and a local Bedfordshire derby at home to Leighton Town to look forward to.

<https://www.halsteadtownfc.com/>

06/20