

TT No.204: *Justin Holmes* - Friday 2nd April 2010; **Faversham Town** v Beckenham Town; Kent League Premier Division; Venue: Salters Lane, Faversham; Score 1-2; Admission: £6.00; Programme: £1.50; Attendance: 233; Match Rating: 3.

Very few clubs choose to play on Good Friday, which to me seems particularly strange if they also have to play on Easter Monday (and so would have an extra day between games were they to play on Good Friday), and so from the small choice I had available, I chose to head to north east Kent for my Good Friday feast for this top of the table Kent League clash.

Salters Lane is about a ten-minute walk from Faversham train station, and is also located just off the A2 London to Dover road. Despite this, the ground has a very rural feel to it, with hardly any traffic noise audible, fields behind two sides of the goal and trees behind the other two. A covered stand which mainly houses seating stretches for around three quarters of the length of one side of the pitch, whilst there is a shallow, three step covered terrace plus a clubhouse behind one of the goals. Apart from an interesting small old-fashioned building which houses the changing room, there is just hard standing along the remaining length and goal end. Salters Lane has certainly come a long way since it lay abandoned and at the mercy of vandals for three seasons after Faversham were previously forced to quit the Kent League in 2003. The transformation has been impressive - the day before this game, Faversham received final confirmation that Salters Lane has passed a ground inspection which would enable them to be promoted to the Ryman League.

Indeed, promotion to the Ryman League now looks a formality for Faversham, having comfortably led the Kent League for most of the season, including a ten-game winning streak between January and March in league and cup, and going into this game, were twelve points clear with just six games left to play. Today would be a tough test for Faversham though, as Beckenham came into the game in excellent form since the turn of the year, and were unbeaten in their last ten games and had won their previous four. They went into this game in third place, and with second place very much in their sights.

The game started off rather scrappily thanks to a very strong gusty wind which made long aerial passes something of a lottery. The visitors took the lead on 12 minutes, thanks to a bullet header from James Holder from about 10 yards out from a corner. Midway through the half, it started to rain persistently, and the game was a fairly even affair, with Faversham looking to have that extra bit of quality without ever really threatening at goal. For the second half, the wind had died away but the persistent rain become ever heavier, which made playing conditions ever more treacherous, with players struggling to control the ball on a sticky, unpredictable surface. Faversham got back on level terms within five minutes of the restart, with Damian Abel tucking away the rebound from a fairly tight angle after his initial shot was saved by the keeper. After getting back on level terms, Faversham dominated the game, having some wonderful chances to

score, but just as it looked like the game would end in a 1-1 draw, Beckenham scored in the last minute with an excellent individual goal from Gary Gorman, who came in from the right wing, waltzed past a couple of challenges and tucked the ball home. This was harsh on Faversham for whom a draw would have been a fairer result.

Despite this defeat, Faversham must still be considered red-hot favourites to win the title, even with news coming in later that the second placed team, Herne Bay, had won their game to reduce the gap to 9 points. Beckenham consolidated their position in the league with this win and move seven points clear of fourth places Sevenoaks (although Sevenoaks do have two games in hand) and look in an excellent position to claim a top three finish.

06/20