

**TT No.208: Paul Roth** - Mon April 5th 2010; Kent County League Division 2 East; **HAWKENBURY FC** vs. LANES END FC; Res: 2-1; Att: 5; Programme and Entry: N/A; Weather: Breezy but dry; Altitude: The Hawkenbury Recreation Ground is 132m (433.070 ft) above sea level.

I'm an only child and as such have always had little trouble amusing myself. Boredom rarely rears its ugly head as far as I'm concerned. Now, in later life, whenever travelling around Groundhopping I'm perfectly okay with just my own company; sometimes solitude is even preferable. That's not to say that the companionship of friends isn't treasured and enjoyed; it is.

Anyway, you're never really on your own; if you do feel the urge to chat, then there's almost 7 billion other human beings on the planet to converse with. Failing that, I've found dogs and cats to be pretty good listeners; I've even been known to engage in the occasional natter with an erudite bumble bee or learned rose! Just as well I like my own company then, for when this KCL Division 2 East match kicked-off, I was the sole spectator; our ranks did eventually swell later to 5!

The Hawkenbury Recreation Ground is a pleasant-enough place to spend an afternoon as it happens, and if you care to look around it thoroughly there's more to it than first meets the eye. For starters, the wooded vistas eastward from the edge of the cricket pitch along the High Weald Landscape Trail are rather splendid. Located on the Hawkenbury Road, 1.118 miles east of Royal Tunbridge Wells, the ground is accessed via an ample car park which abuts the shuttered and rather drab-looking wooden changing facility. A floodlit Astro turf pitch occupies one corner of the 'Rec', whilst smaller-sized soccer pitches and a self-contained tennis court comprise the other sporting facilities. It's also a popular dog-walking/pooping area too!

The main football pitch itself is mostly level but does run slightly downhill at the spa-town end. There's no structure or cover pitch-side, as you'd perhaps expect at this level, but a nice touch is the blue and white striped goal nets, which initially foxed your reporter, as Hawkenbury FC play in amber and black!

To emphasise the no-need-to-be-alone maxim I got chatting with the friendly home 'keeper, who explained that a catalogue of injured and side-lined players was responsible for 'Bury's 1-6 mauling at the hands of AFC Sevenoaks two days previously. Attacking the sloped end and with a strong wind behind them, Lanes End, from Dartford, looked as if they might inflict something similar on their hosts, as a sustained offensive was directed towards my new 'pal'. Eventually, after half an hour, that pressure paid dividends when the visitors took the lead following an error by, you know who! Hawks had a goal ruled out for offside but otherwise it had been Lanes End's half.

A half-time cuppa worked wonders, as the next forty-five minutes were predominantly the homster's. Two strikes within five minutes of one another,

midway through this second period, were good enough to secure them maximum points.

Late, but mainly misdirected pressure from the men in blue and white required only one good save from my mate. Another hour and we'd probably have been on each other's Christmas card lists!

Having been promoted to the County League this season as Tonbridge and District League champions, the club has adjusted admirably to its new surroundings and a mid-table finishing position is all but guaranteed. It may be taken as read that they're a friendly bunch too! More can be gleaned about Hawkenbury FC from their informative website.

All in all, another enjoyable day out, with three 'ticks' accrued. The club itself, the Royal Oak public house in RTW (the last hostelry needed to complete my Kent 'set' in this year's GBG) and another new 'friend'.

FGIF Star Rating: 4\*.

06/20