

TT No.219: *Justin Holmes* - Tues 13th April 2010; **Rusthall** v Tonbridge Invicta; Kent County League Premier Division; Venue: Jockey Farm, Rusthall; Score: 0-1; Admission/Programme: N/A; Attendance: 40 (estimate); Match Rating: 3.

One small positive aspect in footballing groundhopping terms of the worst winter the south-east of England has experienced for decades is that there is now a plethora of midweek fixtures to choose from at clubs who do not usually play midweek fixtures through lack of floodlights during the final few weeks of the season. For today's 6.30pm kick off, I headed to the outskirts of Tunbridge Wells, to a ground I have visited a few times already, but grounds such as Jockey Farm are always worth a return visit, particularly in the warmer, sunnier months of the season.

Jockey Farm is a brisk 40-minute walk from Tunbridge Wells train station via a pleasant walk through Tunbridge Wells Common for about half of the distance. There are also frequent buses available. It's a very pleasant, rural ground in a very peaceful setting which, as the name suggests, is located adjacent to a farm - indeed, you walk through a farmyard to enter the ground. As Kent County League grounds go, Rusthall is one of the best, with hard standing all around the railed off pitch, and a small covered standing area is provided between the welcoming clubhouse and the pitch. Rusthall have voiced ambition to install floodlights and to rise up to the Kent League in the past, however they have never really had a team that have threatened finish high enough in the league for promotion and quite considerable ground improvements would also have to be made. The pitch is very undulating, with a noticeable slope towards the end where the clubhouse is located. No admission and, more surprisingly, no programmes were issued, surprising because they have been reliable issuers in the past and the local derby this evening was always going to attract one of the best attendances of the season.

Rusthall do not have too much left to play for this season, sitting in a respectable sixth place and with clear daylight above and below them in the table. There was still plenty left to play for this evening's visitors however, as Tonbridge Invicta, in their first season in the Premier Division, were third from bottom, with only three points separating them from the relegation zone having played more games than those in currently in the relegation zone, and Invicta had only gleaned one point from their last six games.

The game was played in bright sunshine under clear skies, although with a strong wind making it feel deceptively cold. The game itself wasn't a particularly inspiring affair it has to be said, although throughout Tonbridge Invicta always looked the better and more threatening side, with Rusthall only very rarely threatening the Invicta goal. What turned out to be the winning goal came midway through the first half, when a free-kick was taken about 25 yards out which rocketed onto the crossbar, bounced down and hit the Rusthall keeper on the back to roll into the net, which I suppose would have to go down as an own goal.

This was a thoroughly deserved win for Tonbridge Invicta, who were for the most part by far the better side, and now move six points clear of the relegation zone with two games to play. However, their destiny is not in their own hands however due to having played three games more than Milton and Fulston, who currently occupy one of the two relegation places.

06/20