

TT0910-220

**TT No.220: Justin Holmes** - Wed 14th April 2010; **Robertsbridge United** v Mountfield United; East Sussex League Division 1; Venue: The Clappers, Robertsbridge; Score 2-1; Admission/Programme: N/A; Attendance: 40 (est.); Match Rating: 3.

Another evening taking advantage of an early evening, 6.30 kick-off took me to 1066 country for this very local derby in the East Sussex League, with the visitors, Mountfield United, based just a couple of miles from the village of Robertsbridge, located between Tunbridge Wells and Hastings.

The Clappers Recreation Ground is located about a 15-minute walk from the train station, via a walk through the very pleasant high street of Robertsbridge, which contains several very alluring, old-fashioned pubs. The football pitch is part of a small complex which includes a cricket pitch and a children's play area, both of which you walk past from the road to get to the football pitch. As is normal for the East Sussex League, there are no facilities at this playing field, and only changing rooms distant from the pitch. The setting is very pleasant, with trees closely bordering one length of the pitch, whilst behind the other length is a scenic countryside view of a cricket pavilion in the foreground and rolling hills in the background. One point of note was the excellent state of the pitch, which was almost completely flat with grass cut to a perfect length for football - such features are not always to be found of playing surfaces at this level! No programmes are produced, as is standard in this league - only Polegate I have heard produce programmes from the East Sussex League.

This evening's game looked appealing, not just because it was a very local derby, but it also pitched together two teams in good form and with a top two finish firmly within their sights. Mountfield were sitting in second place but could not catch champions elect, Wadhurst United, whilst Robertsbridge were sitting in fifth place in the 11-team league, but with several games in hand against all the other teams in the division. Indeed, they are the only club with a mathematical chance of overhauling Wadhurst, but for that would need to win all of their remaining games and hope that Wadhurst gain no more than a point from their remaining three games. A second-place finish would be much more within their sights and possibly promotion to the Premier League.

On a bright, sunny evening which became ever colder as the game wore on, this was very much a game of two halves. Robertsbridge dominated the first half, took the lead with just five minutes on the clock, which they double with a very well-taken penalty on the half hour. They took this two-goal lead into half-time, which they thoroughly merited by being quicker into challenges and displaying plenty of incisive attacking play, whereas Mountfield looked strangely lethargic. However, Mountfield were certainly the better side in the second half, and halved the deficit with 50 minutes on the clock with a good finish chipped over the onrushing keeper from the corner of the penalty box. Although not as bright as in the first half,

Robertsbridge still had good chances but the game ended with a 2-1 home victory, which was probably a fair reflection of the game.

This was a most enjoyable game of football, attended by a very decent number of supporters for this level, and it was played in a refreshingly competitive but fair spirit. In short, it was everything that is good about amateur village football.

06/20