

TT No.225: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 17th April 2010; **Orpington** v Hollands and Blair; Kent County League Premier Division; Venue: Green Court Sports Club; Score: 0-2; Admission: N/A; Prog: £2.00; Att: 25; Match Rating: 3.

This was a quite different day to what I had planned, as I had booked flights to Belfast for today for my first trip to the Solitude to watch Cliftonville (against Portadown), but these plans had to be cancelled at the last minute, as were all flights into and out of the United Kingdom since Thursday due to the volcanic ash drifting down from Iceland. And so, a rummage around the local football fixtures took me on a much more relaxed afternoon outing to north-west Kent.

Green Court Sports Club is about a 15-minute walk from Swanley train station, via a footpath along the railway line. My thoughts about this ground could be summed up with the words...if only. As you enter the ground, there is a spacious, modern clubhouse, and between this and the pitch, there is a neat, convenient patio area with semi-permanent tables and chairs, which makes for a very pleasant place to enjoy a pre-match pint before the game on a warm and sunny day such as it was today. The ground is fully enclosed, has hard standing most of the way around the railed off pitch, and has a traditional small stand which house plastic bench seating. It's a ground that looks and feels more than fit for Kent League football - if only the ground had floodlights. Without them, there is no prospect of it hosting Kent League football, and as Alma Swanley and Danson Furness found when Green Court was their home ground in the Kent League, planning permission for floodlights here is stubbornly elusive, causing both of these clubs to resign from the Kent League in the 1990's.

The ground has trees lining two sides of the pitch, and views towards miles of countryside and also towards the landmarks of central London visible beyond the other two sides. If only the busy A20 dual carriageway did not run right alongside the ground, this would be a very pleasant, tranquil and rural ground, but instead, the constant roar of traffic is disappointing. Programmes are regularly produced at Orpington, and full credit to those clubs that do in this league where they do not have to. It's a decent 24-page effort printed in colour throughout with all of the essential information to inform the spectator about the club, opposition and league.

Today's game pitched the home club still not safe from relegation against the reigning champions of the Kent County League Premier Division and, having not lost since late November in the league, are very much hunt to retain their title this season. being only two and three points behind the two teams above them but with two games in hand on both.

In truth, this was not one of the most entertaining games I have witnessed by any stretch of the imagination, with Orpington overly reliant on long balls pumped forward at every opportunity, and with Hollands and Blair quite sluggish, and it

was no surprise that the score-line was goalless at half time. Both sides had better chances in the second half, but in the end Hollands and Blair won the game with a cool finish clipped over the keeper by Bryan Greenfield followed by a sublime shot that gave the keeper no chance from fully 25 yards out following a free-kick that the keeper had no chance with.

This was a deserved win for the visitors, although Orpington acquitted themselves well and for the most part there was little sign of the large gap between the teams in the table. And so Hollands and Blair remained firmly on course for the title, although promotion to the Kent League would apparently seem out of reach due to their limited facilities at their home ground, whilst Orpington will probably need a couple of points from their remaining two games to be sure of survival in the Premier League.

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