

**TT No.41: *Justin Holmes*** - Sat 3rd October 2009; **Rotherfield** v Crawley Down III; Mid Sussex League Premier Division; Venue: Recreation Ground, Rotherfield Score: 2-2; Admission and Programme: None; Att: 25; Match Rating: 4.

Today I made my way to the small village of Rotherfield, which is located close to Crowborough in northern East Sussex, to take in this Mid Sussex League Premier Division match between Rotherfield and the third team of Crawley Down, the two teams who had been promoted the previous season and who had both made solid starts to this season.

After enjoying gloriously warm sunshine on every Saturday so far this football season, today was the first taste of the weather to look forward to over the coming months, with a persistently very strong wind with a chilly bite to it, not helped by the exposed nature of this ground.

The Recreation Ground in Rotherfield has a very attractive setting, with clear views across the valley to nearby Jarvis Brook and Crowborough, and the rest of the ground lined with neat hedges, and with the village hall and church close by too. As with almost every other club in this league, no programmes are issued nor admission charged, and there are no refreshments available. The ground is located about a half hour's walk (steep uphill), from Crowborough train station.

The game itself was surprisingly entertaining given that it was dominated by the strong wind, with Crawley Down have the advantage of the strong wind in the first half, but to both sides' credit, they played the ball along the ground as much as possible to negate the influence of the wind. With just three minutes on the clock, Crawley Down took the lead when the ball was smashed in after a minor goalmouth scramble. Rotherfield then equalised on 23 minutes after the ball was crossed low from the touchline and the ball smacked in from about 10 yards out. Rotherfield almost took the lead with an almost carbon copy of their goal but this time the ball was played closer to the keeper who managed to save from point blank range. However, Crawley Down retook the lead just after the half hour when the onrushing forward flicked the ball over the keeper. The score remained at 2-1 to the visitors as they went in at half time, which was a fair reflection of the first half.

However, in the second half, Rotherfield became the better team, unsurprisingly as they now had the advantage of having the wind behind them, and duly equalised on the hour mark. Both sides had great chances to win it....Crawley Down when their forward hit the post after being one-on-one with the goalkeeper and despite the ball rebounding to another forward, a combination of defender and goalkeeper managed to smother the ball away, and Rotherfield when a Crawley Down a defender headed onto his own crossbar and also with the game entering injury time, a headed goal was disallowed for offside. So, the game ended in a 2-2 draw, a fair reflection on an even game full of good goalscoring chances.

For those who like real grass roots football in a pleasant rural location and who do not mind not being able to obtain a programme, you could do a lot worse than take in a trip to this scenic, peaceful setting, although it's probably not a venue worth travelling a long way for.

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