

TT No.73: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 31st October 2009; **Tonbridge Invicta** v Fleet Leisure; Kent County League Premier Division; Venue: Swanmead Sportsground, Tonbridge; Score: 2-4; Admission: None; Prog: £2; Att: 35 (h-c); Match Rating: 4.

Hallowe'en took me to West Kent for this Kent County League Premier Division match at the Swanmead Sports Ground, Tonbridge. Located on the western outskirts of Tonbridge about a half hour walk from the train station, the ground is reasonably well maintained and pleasantly surrounded by trees which gives the ground a nice enclosed and peaceful feel to it. There is hard standing along one length of the pitch, which is roped off, and from the adjacent clubhouse, programmes are available at a cost of £2. The programme was a 12-page effort which was basic but included notes from the manager, fixtures and results, a league table and a brief introduction to both teams. A reasonable effort for the level of football, and as always, congratulations to any team which goes to the trouble of producing a programme in a league where they are not compulsory.

This match pitched together two teams separated by just a point in the middle of the league table, although Tonbridge Invicta came into this game bang in form, having won every one of their four games in October, including a 6-2 win the previous week, whereas Fleet Leisure were also unbeaten throughout October, although three of their four games had been drawn 2-2. So, an entertaining game with goals was expected, and this was exactly how it turned out, indeed, it was certainly one of the more bizarre, seesaw games I am likely to witness all season.

For the first quarter of an hour, this game did not look promising, with both teams cancelling each other out in the middle of the park, although out of the two teams, Fleet Leisure looked the better side. However, Tonbridge quickly scored twice midway through the second half and became the much better side and looked good value for their lead at half time. This continued into the second half of a game which became increasingly fractious, with bad tempers and poor tackles spoiling the spirit of the game. This would certainly seem to have suited Tonbridge in maintaining their lead, all the more so when Fleet Leisure had a player sent off after a second yellow card for dissent midway through the second half. Teams that are reduced to ten men often tend to pull together to put in a rejuvenated performance, but the transformation in this game was truly remarkable. Fleet Leisure scored three quick goals within ten minutes of being reduced to ten men to turn the game around, and scored a fourth just before the final whistle to confirm all three points for the away team, which they probably deserved for the way in which they blew Tonbridge away in the second half despite playing with only ten men.