

**TT No.78: *Justin Holmes*** - Tues 3rd November 2009; **Crowborough Athletic** v East Grinstead Town; Sussex County League Division 1; Venue: Crowborough Community Stadium, Crowborough; Score: 1-4; Admission: £6.00 (incl. programme); Attendance: 94; Match Rating: 3.

A rare midweek outing took me to the Crowborough Community Stadium (known previous to the recent extensive ground improvements as the Alderbrook Recreation Ground) for this Sussex County League Division 1 match. Crowborough have certainly had a rollercoaster ride in recent seasons. Just six seasons ago they were languishing at intermediate level in Division 3 of the Sussex County League, but after a remarkable rise through the divisions were promoted two seasons ago to the Ryman League for the first time in their history. However, as can happen, chasing the dream turned into a nightmare as their main benefactor pulled out, comfortably finished bottom of the Ryman League Division 1 South last season and now a second successive relegation is looking increasingly inevitable for a team of youngsters who, however talented they may be, desperately require a few experienced players with the necessary nous to survive in this competitive league. Considering Crowborough are currently unable to pay their players, (indeed, players are having to pay to play), that looks extremely unlikely.

The Crowborough Community Stadium has certainly improved beyond all recognition in the past couple years, being transformed from an open ground with just a small stand to being fully fenced off, three stands (one of them seated) and one end providing cover as well as a bar and refreshments. The ground is located about a 20-minute uphill walk from Crowborough train station, alternatively a bus from Tunbridge Wells stops outside the ground for afternoon fixtures. A programme is included with the £6 admission and looks better than it is. It's a glossy programme printed in colour on hardened paper, and full stats from every game played so far was a positive, however there was little interesting reading otherwise.

Going into this local derby game, Crowborough were bottom of the table with just 8 points collected from their opening 14 games and conceding 42 goals in the process, however their chances of adding to their tally looked reasonable against an East Grinstead side only 2 points better off, although from just 11 games.

After a lively opening to this game, Crowborough took the lead on 23 minutes slightly against the run of play. However, East Grinstead hit back within 4 minutes and led 2-1 at the break. At half time, the feeling was this game could have gone either way, with both sides looking shaky at the back. However, the game was effectively put to bed within a minute of the restart when East Grinstead scored their third goal, and from that moment on, the youthful Crowborough side barely threatened foe the rest of the game. East Grinstead scored a fourth on 63 minutes as they took complete control of the game, and really should have scored two or three more as they missed several golden chances to score.

