

TT No.253: *Andy Gallon* - Sat 23rd April 2011; **Beeston St Anthony's** v East End Park WMC; WYL Prem Division; Res: 2-2; Att: 64 (h/c); Admission: Free; Programme: £1 (24pp); FGIF Match Rating: ****.

THE GROUND: The King Field is very new - and a most appealing enclosure. Beeston St Anthony's moved here only last autumn from their former Beggars Hill ground. The old place looked down on Elland Road (physically, rather than economically), and masqueraded as Derby County's training pitch in the film version of David Peace's novel *The Damned United*. The role earned the Saints some handy pin money. The land on which The King Field stands is owned by Leeds City Council, and the club have a 21-year lease. An eye-watering bill of £100,000 for laying two pitches was shared 50/50 between the local authority and the Saints, who raised their stake with the help of grants from various sources, including the Football Foundation. The club then spent a further £12,000 (my eyes moistened afresh) on the fence which encloses the ground and the railings around the pitch, which I felt (possibly erroneously) was on the short side when I walked across it at half-time.

Originally, St Anthony's planned for dressing rooms next to the pitch. This wasn't possible, and one is obliged to walk about 100 yards to reach one from the other. I imagine this might cause problems should they ever decide to join the pyramid via the Northern Counties East League. The modern, spacious dressing rooms belong to the neighbouring Hugh Gaitskell (Labour legend and once an MP hereabouts) Primary School, and Beeston pay a few hundred quid a year to use them.

Hardstanding has been laid on the near side, reached by a wide surfaced path between a floodlit tarmac five-a-side pitch and the car park of a manufacturer of medical instruments, whose ugly factory behind the west end goal hummed mysteriously throughout. Shallow grass banking at the east end, beyond which are allotments, and along the opposite side, which backs on to industrial units, provides excellent vantage points. The whitewashed breeze block dug-outs, roofless and yet to be completed, straddle the halfway line on the far side. Beeston hope to erect a simple cover on the near side. There aren't any floodlights, and no immediate prospect of any. The King Field feels like a fairly compact venue, which is always good in my book. The second pitch, such as it is, lies beyond the perimeter fence at the west end of the ground. The main pitch, for this local derby, was rock hard and pretty bumpy. It has had more punishment since the ground opened than Beeston would have liked. Their first and reserve teams use it, along, occasionally, with a women's side. Remedial work is scheduled for the summer. There isn't a bar at the ground, therefore the Saints use Holbeck Bowling Club as a, and I quote the programme, social headquarters.

THE GAME: One, as they say, of two contrasting halves. Beeston bossed the opening 45 minutes, and should have been home and hosed by the interval. As it was, wayward finishing meant they led just 2-0. The first goal, in the 27th minute,

was a close-range header from John 'Bomber' Wardropper and the second, four minutes later - a delightful lob, by Ash Westcarr, over a wandering opposition keeper who, for the most part, looked as disorientated as Nick Clegg trying to justify Tory-inspired coalition policies.

A vastly different tale in the second half, however. For whatever reason, the Saints switched off. East End Park WMC took control and equalised thanks to a six-yard Kurtis Wilkinson prod (57min) and a glancing Shaun Coggill header from a corner (78min). The visitors should have gone on to win, but lacked composure in front of goal. When they did get a shot on target, Beeston keeper Brendon Wood pulled off several good saves, including two in one-on-ones. A draw, between Leeds neighbours in the top five of the Premier Division table at kick-off, was just about the right result.

THE CLUB: Formed, as a church team, in 1921. That's as much as I know!

THE PLACE: Beeston, along with several other districts in south Leeds, does not have the best reputation. It's reckoned to be pretty rough, but this was my second visit to a St Anthony's game (the first was to 'tick' Beggars Hill) and on both occasions everything was fine. I've certainly been to, far scarier parts of Britain! Not that there aren't unscrupulous toe-rags amongst the local population. We were told that, the previous Saturday, when St Anthony's staged a double-header of first and reserve team games, a young lad had distracted the elderly chap on the gate with a request for a chocolate bar while his mate lifted the day's £160 takings. Apparently, that amount would have covered the expenses of the two sets of match officials. Let's hope justice, natural or otherwise, eventually catches up with the thieves. The financial blow took the shine off becoming the first team to inflict a league defeat (2-0) this season on runaway leaders Bardsey. I wonder how some people sleep at night, but then I'm a law-abiding fellow who tries hard to treat others as I would wish to be treated myself.

THE PROGRAMME: The Saints resumed production earlier this season, with a new editor at the helm, replacing the enthusiastic and welcoming Terry Rowe, who is now club chairman. It is always heartening to find 'paper' at this level of the game, and Beeston's colourful issue is extremely tidy. From a cheerful cover right through neatly laid out pages, it looks very professional. It's the best I've come across in the West Yorkshire League. The club estimate the programme brings in £2,000 per season. When they stopped issuing for a time, they certainly missed the cash!

THE VERDICT: Pleasant ground, friendly people, a decent programme and exciting football. Isn't that what 'hopping' is all about?

07/20