

**TT No.266: *Andy Gallon*** - Fri 29th April 2011; **Wakefield FC** v Curzon Ashton; NPL Div. One North; Res: 0-1; Att: 208; Admission: £7.50 (incl. 28pp prog); FGIF Match Rating: \*.

There was never a chance in a million of me watching the Royal Wedding. I imagine, on the whole, the House of Windsor is populated by fairly amiable souls. But the concept of monarchy is (or at least should be) alien to a modern meritocracy, which Britain, even under the likes of David Cameron and Nick Clegg, purports to be. The Queen and her ghastly offspring, whatever income for UK plc their continued presence might attract, represent privilege and, as such, are way past their sell-by date. Mind you, I wouldn't go quite as far as yesterday's man Morrissey, who during the build-up to the fearfully expensive, recession-busting pomp and circumstance at Westminster Abbey, described the Royal Family as benefit scroungers.

So, what to do with the day? Indifferent weather, the first for some time, put paid to a photographic expedition in walking boots. At the last minute, I decided, against my better judgement, to pop down the A642 and revisit College Grove, home to Wakefield FC over the past four and a half years. It was an important occasion - the club's last game at the former home of the defunct Wakefield RUFC. It seems the Bears (as, for reasons unfathomable to me, they are now nicknamed) fell out with the landlord, Wakefield Sports Club, and were given instructions to clear off.

Next season will see them share Ingfield with neighbours Ossett Town. I'm struggling to see how that will be viable. No-one watches Wakefield FC at College Grove (the previous three attendances at the ground were a pitiful 70, 54 and 86), so why on earth would they be tempted to trail over to Ossett to see them? And don't expect anyone from Ossett to watch the relocated club. The population of Greater Ossett isn't interested in either Ossett Town or Ossett Albion - both clubs are lurching along with tiny crowds and have been relegated this season. Merge Wakefield FC, Ossett Town and Ossett Albion, and you might just about have 250 fans to rub together. Sell one of the Ossett grounds to a developer, and there ought to be a little working capital. Wakefield Metros, anyone? It won't happen, of course. My prediction for this time next year is that the two Ossett clubs will be in an even more parlous state, and Wakefield FC will be out of business.

Wakefield Sports Club plan to rip up the turf at College Grove and lay an artificial surface for hockey. Wakefield Hockey Club already have several such pitches at the site. I gather the Sports Club's hopes of using the proposed new artificial pitch most evenings under floodlights are opposed by residents. Maybe there is a very slim chance Wakefield FC could be invited to return if the scheme founders.

Someone, somewhere must love Wakefield FC. They were created because Emley found themselves stuck with a three-sided ground which would never be good

enough for anything better than the Premier Division of the NPL. Off they (renamed Wakefield & Emley; didn't fool anyone) went to share Belle Vue with Wakefield Trinity RLFC. Predictably, the arrangement didn't last very long, and when Wakefield RUFC, another club virtually nobody watched, went bust, the re-titled Wakefield FC moved in to College Grove. Life there has been a struggle. Most of Wakefield is preoccupied with rugby league, and those citizens who prefer football tend to follow Leeds United, Barnsley or Huddersfield Town. There were a sizeable number of officials and fans at Emley who were not happy about the switch to Wakefield, however well-intentioned it was, and this disgruntled rump stayed behind to establish AFC Emley, who seem unable to make any headway in the Northern Counties East League. What a mess!

Anyway, here we were, witnessing the next stage of the apparently inevitable demise of Wakefield FC. The presence of hoppers from far and wide boosted the crowd to 208, the second highest of the season (born again Chester's visit last September drew 517). Unfortunately, this administering of the last rites was duller than watching Wills and Kate exchange vows. A granite hard, dust bowl of a pitch didn't help. But, really, what occurred was barely recognisable as football. Curzon Ashton needed to win, and hope Chorley didn't at Salford City, to secure a home tie in the end-of-season play-offs. But they didn't field a terribly strong side, opting to give a run-out to a number of players who were returning from injury.

The match concluded almost without incident. The visitors won thanks to a crisp finish in the 40th minute from Daniel Broadbent, though the free-kick which led to the goal was taken from the wrong place. Demi Kyriacou squandered Wakefield FC's best chance, volleying against David Carnell in the 62nd minute with only the Curzon keeper to beat. Right on time, a quick throw left Chris McDonagh through on the right side of the box, but he couldn't double Curzon's tally, shooting across goal and wide. It was that sort of day. One Curzon player summed it up during the second half when he tried to rally his team-mates by shouting: "C'mon lads, don't let it get any flatter than it is." So dire was all this that I abandoned half-formed plans for a double-header, opting to give a miss to the evening kick-off West Riding Challenge Cup Final at Fleet Lane in nearby Woodlesford. The thought of suffering afresh whilst Otley Town and Bay Athletic scratched about in equally incompetent fashion had me dashing Le Mans-style for my car, with the aim of getting home as quickly as possible.

Farewell, then, College Grove. Not a bad little ground for this level of football. The main stand, despite being fairly modern, had a bit of character - and still contained the amber and black seats put in by the rugby union club. The terracing either side of it boasted traditional crush barriers. The rest didn't amount to much. You know the sort of thing: portable buildings and temporary cover fashioned from scaffolding and heavy-duty plastic. At least, for a while, Wakefield FC could call it home. Which is something Ossett Town's Ingfield ground will never be.

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