

TT No.284: Justin Holmes - Tuesday 17th May 2011; **Snodland** v Bearsted; Kent County League Premier Division; Venue: Potyn's Field, Snodland; Score: 1-2; Admission: Nil; Programme: £1.00; Attendance: 64 (h/c); Match Rating: 3.

With even fixtures in the intermediate leagues now petering out, at least there were still matches to choose from in the Kent County League, with the final fixtures playing this midweek, and so I headed to mid Kent for a local derby between two clubs based just outside the County town of Kent, Maidstone.

Potyn's Field, home of Snodland, is about a one mile, 20-minute walk from Snodland train station, via the town centre. It has long since been a source of curiosity for me at how wildly the standard of grounds vary in the Kent County League, and Potyn's Field certainly falls at the basic end of the spectrum.

Spectator facilities are minimal, with hard standing available along just a section of one length of the pitch, with the Community Centre building located close by. The pitch is only roped off all the way around. Minimal the facilities may be, but the setting is extremely attractive, rural and peaceful, with trees lining each end of the pitch, and rolling hills visible behind one length of the pitch. Behind the other, a five-a-side cage and the car park flank the Community Centre. The pitch was in superb condition. It was, unsurprisingly given the prolonged dry weather, very hard, but very even with predicable bounce, although with quite a pronounced slope from one end to the other.

For a club with such basic facilities, one that does not even have a website, it came as a very pleasant surprise to find not only do Snodland (currently) issue programmes, but that they are of very good quality too. 20-pages printed partly in colour and packed with welcome message, history of Snodland and Bearsted, plenty of season and league stats, a challenging quiz and not much advertising, it was a really good effort for a club playing at intermediate level.

This evening's game was between two of the also-rans of the Kent County League Premier Division, Snodland being in eighth place in the 16 team league, two points and one place above Bearsted although this game was Snodland's last of the season, whereas Bearsted still have two further games to play this Thursday and Saturday, Snodland could finish anywhere between seventh and tenth, whereas Bearsted could still finish sixth or as low as tenth. It has been a strange end to the season for Snodland, claiming just one point from their previous three games, including a 0-9 thrashing at Cray Valley, but collecting ten points from four games previously. Bearsted have had a similar vein of form, having not won in their last four games, but had won four of their previous five games, drawing the other. These two sides only played each other last Tuesday in the corresponding fixture at Bearsted, ending in a 1-1 draw.

On a chilly and very overcast evening, this was an entertaining game that was hard-fought, but for the most part played in the right spirit. The visitors took the

lead with just five minutes on the clock with a simple goal, headed in from 12 yards out following an excellent whipped in cross from out wide. Snodland got back on level terms on the half hour with a rather curious goal, curled in slowly from the edge of the penalty area just inside the post. I can only presume the goalkeeper was unsighted as the shot had little power as it floated in. 1-1 was how it stayed at half time, and it looked like that was how it would stay for most of the second half, with plenty of endeavour but little threat to either goal. However, with ten minutes to go, the home side were awarded a penalty. In my opinion, the referee did not cover himself with glory here, contact looked minimal and certainly looked outside of the box. Then, when a Snodland player raised a hand to a Bearsted player's face, all he received was a yellow card. Justice was done though when the Bearsted keeper made a good save low to his left. Within a couple of minutes, Snodland were made to pay for failing to score that penalty when Bearsted scored what turned out to be the winner with a precise finish from a narrow angle after the keeper came out to meet the Bearsted striker at the edge of the penalty area. After a delay due to the netting coming loose, Bearsted held on fairly comfortably for a victory when a draw probably would have been a more accurate reflection of the game.

07/20