

TT No.49: *Rob Campion* - Sat 11 September 2010; **Arnold Town** v Hall Road Rangers; Northern Cos East League Prem Division; Admission: £5; Prog: £1.20; Bottle of beer: £2.80; Tray of chips: £1; Coffee: 80p; Att: 50 (official); Match rating: 2½/5.

A few choices today but none that jumped out at me that were within a short drive of my dad's house in the eastern suburbs of Leicester. In the end the short drive to Arnold Town's new ground was chosen for their Northern Counties East League (NCEL) encounter with East Yorkshire side Hall Road Rangers. I had visited Arnold's old ground in town twice and both times happened to be with dad also. The second of the two games (back in November 2002), was when they hosted Harrogate Railway Athletic in a NCEL Cup match and despite leading 3-0 after half an hour lost the game 3-6. A repeat of the number of goals today will be most welcome!!! Another useless fact is that Arnold will be only the third club that I have seen a more than one ground. The other two are Leicester City (Filbert Street and the Walkers Stadium) and Hinckley United (Middlefield Lane and the Marstons Stadium).

The club were formed in 1989 through a merger of Arnold FC and Arnold Kingswell FC. Their debut season saw them compete in the supreme division of the Central Midlands League (CML) and 3rd place was achieved. Three seasons later and they were crowned CML champions and secured promotion to division one of the NCEL. Success came instantly in their new surroundings as they lifted the division 1 title at the first attempt and with it came another promotion to the premier division of the NCEL. The first season in the top flight saw them record their best ever finish when they finished runners-up behind champions Lincoln United. The club have been present in the premier division ever since and last season finished in 8th place in the twenty-team division. Opponents Hall Road Rangers were founded in 1959 and come from Dunswell which is just to the north of Kingston-upon-Hull. They joined the Yorkshire League in 1968 and won the division 3 title on two occasions in 1972/73 and 1979/80. In 1982 they became founder members of the NCEL and were division 2 winners in 1990/91. A runners-up spot two seasons ago secured promotion to the premier division.

Arnold moved into Eagle Valley a few years ago having been forced to vacate their ground on Gedling Road in the town. The ground is a couple of miles north of the town centre and they received funding for it from the Football Foundation. It took around 45 - 50 minutes to get there from my dad's house in the Humberstone Green area of Leicester and is very easy to find. If coming from the north and east of the city head north east on the A46 towards Newark, then take the A6097 towards Doncaster, cross the A612 island then after passing the Calverton turn-off, turn left at the island onto the B6386 (signposted Arnold & Nottingham) and the ground is on the left after the golf club just before the junction with the A614. You enter the ground through red gates into a pot-holed car park with the clubhouse

and changing rooms in front of the main floodlit pitch. Either side of the main pitch is a number of other pitches which cater for the clubs' reserve and junior sides. Before the game there is no access to the clubhouse from the compounds of the ground.

We arrived at the ground around forty minutes before kick-off and thus went and had a drink and bite to eat with a pint of "Extra Pale Ale" from the Nottingham Brewery going down very well. Entrance to ground is via a single turnstile and admission cost £5 with a further £1.20 for a pretty decent home-produced programme. There are two areas of cover here with one seated and one standing - the seated one is on the clubhouse side which straddles the half way line and is called the Ivan Long Stand, while the other stand is on the opposite side of the ground between the two dugouts.

At the start of play both sides were at the wrong end of the table with Arnold recording just one win in their opening five league games and visitors Hall Road notching up one point from four league outings. This showed in the opening half hour as putting it mildly...dire. The only save (and chance) of note in this opening period came on twenty-three minutes when a shot from Arnold's Tony Law was tipped over by Michael Burley in the Hall Road goal. With the game seemingly having 0-0 written all over it, Arnold took the lead on thirty-four minutes when the ball was played back across the goal from the right and Darren Bettison scored with a first time shot at the far post. Two minutes later and the visitors caught the home side napping when Adam Walker lobbed the ball over the advancing Michael Kelly. Hall Road took the lead for the first time right at the end of the half when a free kick was turned in by Lee Macklin, though from our perspective it appeared to be an own goal. Arnold came out in the second half with all guns blazing and Chris Freestone equalised on forty-nine minutes when his shot was fumbled by Michael Burley into the goal. Arnold continued to dominate in terms of both possession and territory and created a number of chances, but were hit on the counter-attack on seventy-one minutes when Hall Road scored with their first chance of the half through substitute Paul Palmer. Arnold pressed for a deserved equaliser but were hit again on the counter-attack right at the death when Palmer drilled the ball across goal and Chris Wilson was in the wrong place at the wrong time as he turned the ball into his own net. This gave a gloss on the score-line that in my neutral opinion the visitors did not deserve.

07/20