

TT No.64: Rob Campion - Sat 25th September 2010; Nettleham v Pinxton; Central Midlands League Supreme Division; Venue: Mulsanne Park; Result: 3-4; Admission: £3; Prog: £1; Coffee, sausage roll & Kit-Kat: £1.90; Att: 25 (h/c); Match rating: 4 1/2*.

Following on from the noon kick-off at Winterton I made the thirty-mile drive south down the A15 to Nettleham for their Central Midlands League (CML) game against Pinxton and arrived with around fifteen minutes to go before kick-off.

Nettleham is a large village located four miles north-east of Lincoln between the A15 and A46 and has a population of around 6,500. The football club play on Mulsanne Park which is located on the southern edge of the village. The ground forms part of a larger sports complex which includes cricket, tennis and further football pitches. The cricket and football club share the pavilion which includes bar, catering facilities and pool table.

The following history on the club is taken from their programme:

"It is believed that Nettleham FC originated around 1905 and played on land (part of the old Nettleham Hall) situated outside the village. Changing rooms were located in the Halfway House, a pub at the entrance to the village. Following World War 2 the club relocated to the Bill Bailey Memorial Field, near the village centre playing there for over thirty years. The first twenty-five were without changing facilities, only one narrow pitch and in relatively poor condition owing mainly to its use by the village children.

1979 marked a vast improvement in facilities with the opening of the new sports ground, Mulsanne Park, named after the twin village near Le Mans) with the use of three pitches, pavilion facilities with dressing rooms and showers thereby allowing the introduction of junior football teams. These new facilities jettisoned the club forward. In 1981 they were admitted into division two of the Lincolnshire League and immediately gained promotion to the 1st division.

They ultimately gained membership into the Central Midlands League in 1988 and promotion to the supreme division in 1990. Locally they have twice beaten Lincoln United at Sincil Bank to win the Lincolnshire Senior B County Cup.

In recent years the club's amateur status has contributed to some real relegation contests. Against opposing quality players paid for their involvement the club is proud of their achievement in maintaining their current status.

Off the field has been equally difficult with significant bank loans being entered into to provide continuing enhancements to facilities - ie. new floodlights, fencing off the lower pitch and building a new stand. All loans are now fully paid.

Following the recent award of Charter Standard status Nettleham FC can now offer footballing opportunities at Junior, Intermediate, Girls and Senior Ladies levels and

would welcome any interested members to participate and hopefully serve the club through differing age groups with aspirations to represent this club at senior level."

Nettleham went into this game in fifteenth place recording two wins in nine league games, while Pinxton sit top being unbeaten in their six league games played. The game was an absolute cracker with Nettleham taking the game to the visitors and certainly giving as good as they got playing some decent football to boot. Pinxton played an attacking game as well but was more of a direct style with the words "get it on 'em" coming from the dugout. Pinxton opened the scoring on the twenty-minute mark when Craig Housley headed home a free kick. Six minutes later and Housley doubled his tally when he hit a powerful shot into the roof of the net from ten yards out, despite the close attention of the keeper and a couple of defenders on the line. Pinxton added a third on thirty-one minutes through Ben Bacon as he went on a run that took him past a couple of defenders before putting the ball past the keeper into the corner. Nettleham didn't let their heads drop and continued to push forward but the half ended 0-3. The second half was a complete turn-around as the hosts took the game to Pinxton from the off and got one back on 58 minutes. The visiting defence was caught napping and their number seven produced a low finish past the keeper. An own goal around the seventy-minute mark gave Nettleham a second and the belief that they could get something from the game, and they deservedly drew level just five minutes later when Shane Beesley drilled home a free kick into the bottom corner. Pinxton had to play the last ten minutes or so with ten men when their number eight was sent off for two bookable offences, the second of which was for kick the ball away. The hosts continued to press and always looked likely to take all three points. As often is the case with football a sucker punch occurs. This time it was deep in injury time and the end of the game when Nettleham were awarded a corner. The keeper caught the ball and Pinxton broke up field with devastating effect, Housley fed one of the substitutes who rode a couple of challenges before rounding the home goalkeeper and finishing from a yard out. Cue mass celebrations from the Pinxton players and bench and deflation from Nettleham.

One of best games I have seen in a while and a major kick in the teeth for Nettleham who were, in my neutral opinion the better side on the day. To come from three down and half time, to then equalise and only to lose it right at the death is a real blow and something they in no way did deserve.

07/20