

TT No.78: *Andy Gallon* - Sat 2nd October 2010; **East End Park WMC** v Kellingley Welfare; West Yorkshire League Prem; Res: 2-0; Att: 46 (h/c); Admission: Free; Programme: £1 (8pp); FGIF Match Rating: ***.

THE PLACE: Leeds. Oh dear. Never a favourite destination of mine. The city centre, now dominated by over-priced apartment blocks after becoming trendy almost overnight, has acquired a veneer of Harvey Nicks-inspired sophistication in recent years. But scratch the surface by taking a two-minute walk from the main shopping drag, and essentially Leeds is the same workaday dump it always has been. East End Park WMC are based on the east side of the city, just off the A64 York road. There is a council-owned Victorian park in East End Park, which is close to Halton Moor and Osmondthorpe, and boasts a significant Irish community. Not one of the best parts of Leeds, yet far from being among the worst.

THE CLUB: Founded as recently as 2004, though teams bearing the name East End Park have seen action since the 1930s. The latest version was set up to cater for lads who had played junior football and wanted to stay together. After the demise of their Sunday side, Park run three teams - seniors, reserves and U16s. It seems some members of the youthful first team have known each other since they were four years old. East End Park were eager to wear the traditional colours of the team originally bearing the name, but unearthing the exact combination proved difficult. After a spell in blue and white, then tangerine and black, they now turn out in claret and light blue.

THE GROUND: Skelton Road is a typical West Yorkshire League set-up. The pitch, on a raised shelf, well grassed and a little uneven, is railed off and has dug-outs, but there isn't any cover, hard standing or floodlights. Spare turf beyond the south touchline is lit in rudimentary fashion for training purposes by lamps mounted on a single, forlorn telegraph pole. Apparently, subterranean workings ensure the pitch drains well. Postponements, we were told, are almost unknown at Skelton Road. Despite being pretty close to the city centre, it's a quiet spot sandwiched between an estate of post-war red-brick semis, modern industrial units and a newly-built care home. From the latter's rear windows, it's possible for those stoically batting out their twilight years to take a break from drooling and watch the game. A brick chimney beyond the north-east corner surveys proceedings in a similarly doleful manner. Plenty of trees help to create a surprisingly semi-rural atmosphere. Portable buildings, next to the tiny car park at the west (Skelton Road) end, contain the dressing rooms and are the place to head for large mugs of tea, programmes and the line-ups.

THE GAME: An entertaining contest between two clubs promoted last season from the First Division of the West Yorkshire League. Kellingley Welfare pipped East End Park to the title, but lost manager Craig Elliot and most of the squad to Northern Counties East League Glasshoughton Welfare over the summer. Park dominated the first half, scoring twice. Kellingley bossed the second, without having any luck in

front of goal. A draw would have been the fairest result. In the opening six minutes, Kellingley's James Bird fluffed a sitter and team-mate Jordan Lawrence's 20-yard volley brought a flamboyant tip-over from keeper Scott McAllister. After that, Park, slicker and speedier, took control. With 19 minutes gone, Adam Tunnicliffe crossed from the left flank to the back post, skipper Shaun Coggill nodded the ball into the six-yard box and an unmarked Luke Coates glanced a header wide of keeper Scott Bennett. Calvin Waite fired wide in a one-on-one before, in the 40th minute, Park's Liam Douglas showed the Kellingley man how to finish with a cool effort having been put through by Tunnicliffe. The outcome turned on an astonishing incident seven minutes into the second half. Bird's lay-off gave Waite space to pull the trigger from outside the box, but his low drive hit the inside of a post, rolled along the goal line, struck the inside of the other post, and was cleared. Had that gone in, I'd have backed Kellingley to salvage a point. They had plenty of possession, but didn't get any nearer to scoring than a close-range Lawrence effort straight at McAllister. Park finished the stronger, and in the last 12 minutes Coates (in a one-on-one) and beefy substitute Martin Wigglesworth (an indecently open goal) could have extended the home side's lead. But that would have been very hard on Kellingley, who remain in the bottom two. Three straight wins now for Park, who rise to sixth. Referee Mark Foster had a very good game - and I did my good deed for the day by telling him so after the match. Well, in my time, I've shouted enough criticism at refs. The assessor we chatted to on the way back to the car agreed with our assessment of Foster's performance.

THE PROGRAMME: Always a bonus, regardless of quality, at this level. This is Park's debut season as an issuer. Editor Sean Tunnicliffe (whose son Adam was such an influential figure in this game) produces a tidy publication with an eye-catching cover. It usually extends to 12 pages, but because in the run-up to this fixture he also had to put together the latest edition of the club's impressive monthly newsletter, the pagination was reduced to eight (no adverts, mind). Sean, in the A4 size 14-page Park Life newsletter, reveals how surprised he's been by the level of interest generated in the club since programmes have become available. He mentions the number of email and telephone enquiries he and manager Paul Ogilvie have received, adding: "We have discovered that there's quite a lot of people who like to collect programmes from clubs like East End Park. The collectors all seem to be very friendly and enthusiastic, and it's always good to see new people coming to watch." Oddly, Sean feels it is "a little disconcerting that people are travelling in order to buy them". As we all know, that's very much part of the fun! Sean also reveals how the club website has had hits from 63 countries. East End Park are tops for American surfers (354 visits), with the Germans (136) in second place. I'll say that again because it sounds so good. With the Germans in second place. The newsletter, whose purpose is to keep East End Park WMC members informed of the progress of the three football teams, can be downloaded via <http://www.eep.webeden.co.uk/>

THE VERDICT: Friendly people, a lively game and a decent programme (for this level) resulted in an enjoyable afternoon from football's bargain bin. It was marred only by returning to the car to discover from James Alexander Gordon that

our (rather more expensive) second choice fixture - Chesterfield versus Crewe Alexandra - had finished 5-5. Bet it's goalless when we finally make it to Saltergate's successor! Owing to a lack of cover, East End Park is a club best visited either early or late in the season when the weather is benign. Watching grassroots football here in the depths of winter must be a real endurance test.

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