

TT No.81: *Andy Gallon* - Sat 9th October 2010; **Westella & Willerby** v Sheffield Parramore; CML Sup Division; Res: 1-4; Att: 29 (h/c); Admission: £3; Programme: £1 (12pp); FGIF Match Rating: ***.

THE PLACE: Neither Westella nor Willerby. We're talking Bishop Burton, an affluent village in the pancake wilderness between Hull and York. Whitewashed cottages and a duck pond make it picture postcard pretty. It's little more than a commuter dormitory for wealthy professionals, so there's nothing to do. But the good news is that Beverley, one of East Yorkshire's few jewels, is just a couple of miles away. Beverley is a smaller version of York, and blessedly free of the swarms of gawping, camera-toting foreign tourists which so blight its more popular neighbour. The Minster, even by the standards of such structures, is breathtakingly beautiful, both inside and out. The narrow main street, linking two market places and crammed with expensive shops, can get extremely busy. But the Westwood, Beverley's glorious green lung, provides a great escape from the hustle, bustle and rampant consumerism. Clearly, advice to spend our way out of the recession has been taken to heart here. The Westwood is home to a racecourse, while, more engagingly, cattle are allowed to roam freely across its broad acres. This poses problems for golfers, who must hop over the anti-livestock wire fences which fringe the greens on the Westwood's heathland course. The antics of club hackers amused as we consumed our picnic lunch.

THE CLUB: Westella & Willerby run 24 teams - and only the senior XI doesn't play at Hill Top in Cottingham village on the western outskirts of Hull. Up to £1m has been spent on facilities there, but permission for floodlights is a non-starter and the proximity of pitches used by cricket and amateur rugby league clubs leaves no space to erect stands etc. Hence the upwardly mobile (in a pyramid sense) senior team's nomadic recent existence. They fetched up at Bishop Burton College this summer via Inglemire Lane at the University of Hull and the Blackburn Leisure Social Club in Brough. Ella were formed in 1920 and progressed to the Central Midlands League via the East Riding County and Humber Premier Leagues.

THE GROUND: Part of the impressive Bishop Burton College, upon which £25m of taxpayers' money has been lavished recently. Signs claim this is 'Tomorrow's Learning Today', and describe the campus as "state of the art" and one which "raises the bar for vocational education and training". It's pleasant enough, but students slogging through mostly agriculture and equine-related courses must be desperate for a bit of excitement after three years in this back of beyond. How on earth do they fill their time? Or have any fun? Acre upon acre of parking and pitches stretch away as far as the eye can see. Mostly empty. Oh, apart from a couple of lads having a kick-about on the 4G pitch next to the one Westella & Willerby use. The Centre for Sport & Fitness, whose canteen shut disobligingly before kick-off, was similarly under-patronised. A handful of narcissistic dullards pumping iron in the gym, and that was about it. One wonders (and worries) about

spending priorities in education. There are pros and cons to Ella's new home, following their switch from Brough. The pitch is fantastic and the floodlights (we didn't seem them switched on) are apparently top quality, too. But there isn't any cover or hardstanding. We were told the Central Midlands League (desperate for clubs these days) has given Ella a year's grace to get something sorted out. The college, it seems, is eager to do all it can. A wooden fence, straight out of a farmer's field, surrounds the pitch and the players access it via a five-bar gate in the east corner. hilariously, players taking corners had to open the gate to make some room for manoeuvre. Perspex dugouts are positioned either side of halfway on the far side, which is lined by tall trees. Beyond the village end, there are other pitches laid out for football and rugby. All very basic, even for this level.

THE GAME: A clash of two teams in the top six, this fixture looked good on paper - and lived up to its promise. It did, however, kick off 15 minutes late. There was no obvious explanation, nor apology, and the home fans said it wasn't the first occurrence at the college this season. Sunday morning stuff. Sheffield Parramore, sharper, classier and more composed, were a very useful side and won an entertaining encounter with something to spare. The visitors' best two players, midfielder Keiron Gallagher and striker Craig Mawhood, got among the goals. Mawhood (17min) drilled them ahead with a sweet shot on the turn after Ella failed to clear a corner. Parramore's Tony Nolan was fortunate to escape with a booking for an off-the-ball assault on Rob Start. Gallagher (27min) got the second from the spot following a clumsy Mike Thompson challenge on the pacey Mawhood. Mawhood struck the base of a post with almost the last kick of the first half. Gallagher's cross-cum-shot (50min) from wide on the right found the net for 3-0, though Bobby Stevenson (64min) pulled one back with a well-taken 20-yarder after a poor clearance from keeper Mark Clements. Gavin Davies (67min) crowned a strong run with a cool finish in a one-on-one to complete the scoring. Ella's Allan Laud went close twice in the last eight minutes, hitting a post with a cross from the right. Hoppers made up a third of a sparse crowd. I guess low attendances are inevitable when you play miles from the place you purport to represent.

THE PROGRAMME: Lamentably dull and poor value for money. It bore the hallmarks of a programme issued because the league's rules demand it, rather than the club having any real desire to produce one. Better than nothing - but only just.

THE VERDICT: A good match, but an experience which was pretty uncomfortable on a dry, cool, breezy and overcast autumn afternoon. Given a lack of cover and hardstanding, this isn't a venue I'd fancy visiting any time between November and mid-March.

07/20