

TT No.104: Justin Holmes - Sat 26th November 2011; **Ferring** v Newhaven; Sussex County League Division 3; Venue: The Glebelands, Ferring; Score: 0-2; Admission: None; Programme: £2.00; Att: 40 (est.); Match Rating: 3.

Even heading down to West Sussex, I still had not conclusively made my mind up about which game to go to. Either a much more pleasant ground at Roffey but between two apparently very poor sides, or presumably the much better football game at Ferring without the pleasant setting. Eventually I continued on the train to the outskirts of Worthing for a match that would see the mid-table home side take on formidable opponents.

The Glebelands is about a 15-minute walk from Goring-by-Sea train station, and is in many ways an unremarkable ground yet is amazingly well maintained for a club at this level, a club that has recently been promoted into the Sussex County League. The ground has no hard standing but plastic railing all the way around. There is a small brick stand for standing, and set back from the pitch is a small building housing the clubhouse and changing rooms. Immediately surrounding the ground is housing and a tennis court, with the South Downs in the distance. The ground obviously enjoys much TLC though, with all buildings looking neat, tidy and clean, and special mention must be made of a truly wonderful playing surface - flat, cut short, even having patterns mowed into it, it would not look out of place at any standard of football and is a real credit to the groundsman. Programmes were available from the clubhouse or from a person walking around the ground in the opening minutes of the game, and was a pretty good effort for the level, with a well-designed cover and 12 pages of relevant reading inside an advertising shell.

In their second season back in the Sussex County League (having had two previous spells and were disbanded since the most recent spell, only reforming in 2007), they have had a solid start to the season, and were in 11th place in the 16 team division, with three wins and two draws from their opening eleven games. This will surely be a comfortable season with little threat of going up or down for Ferring. Today's match would have appeared somewhat daunting for them, as Newhaven have been in sensational form. Since opening their season with two draws in the league, they have won twelve of their last thirteen league and cup fixtures since, with a defeat coming in the FA Vase away at Raynes Park Vale (two league steps in the pyramid above Newhaven) after extra time. They were in second place in the league, five points behind leaders Saltdean United but with two games in hand. With a ground that surely ticks all of the boxes for senior football, promotion would appear firmly within their sights. The size of the task facing Ferring became all the more apparent considering they lost 0-9 at Newhaven in September, although their team today would be much changed from that day.

The match started quite evenly, perhaps because Newhaven seemed to want to play possession football and pick their moment to attack, although Ferring looked capable of opening the scoring. On 14 minutes though, Newhaven were awarded a

soft looking penalty (to quote a Newhaven player to his manager), but the penalty was screwed horribly wide of the left-hand post by Mark Probert. For the rest of the half, Newhaven had the stand-out chances, but in general the game was surprisingly very even, as the game reached half-time goalless and the game very much in the balance.

Newhaven seemed to up the ante slightly in the second half, and on 52 minutes struck the crossbar with a long range free-kick, with a couple of good chances for Ferring either side. Just after the hour mark, Newhaven did open the scoring when a free-kick from deep was floated to the far-post and an unmarked Jason Goddard headed in. Just two minutes later and Newhaven doubled their lead. A calamity looked on the cards from the Ferring goalkeeper throughout the match, often racing off his line and failing to deal with the ball, and this time he came charging out of his area to head the ball away, only for Mark Probert to take time to control the ball before expertly lobbing the keeper from long distance - a very good finish at this level. Ferring threatened several more times to score, but so did Newhaven, most notably on 68 minutes when a peach of a strike from outside the area hit the crossbar, and in injury time they had a goal disallowed for offside. So, a predictable three points for Newhaven, which they deserved for their superior quality of play, but Ferring certainly came out with far more credit than they did in their previous encounter with Newhaven.

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