

TT No.11: *Rob Campion* - Sat 20th August 2011; **Brimscombe & Thrupp** v Hook Norton; Hellenic League Div. 1 West; Venue: The Meadow, Brimscombe; Admission: £3 incl. programme; Att: 71 (official); Match rating: 3 1/2.

A day out in Gloucestershire for the Rambler today. I had arranged to visit Colin Buchanan, my Cheltenham supporting friend today as like always when we meet, with Cheltenham having an away game. We had several options and did not decide until I got down to his house at midday.

The drive down to Cheltenham is like every time straight forward from Leicester, only being held up a couple of times. The first being in roadworks when trying to get onto the M6 between Nuneaton and Coventry and secondly due to the volume of traffic on the M5 south of Worcester. The decision was made to stay relatively local to Cheltenham and visit Hellenic League newcomers Brimscombe & Thrupp for their Division 1 West fixture against Oxfordshire side Hook Norton.

Brimscombe and Thrupp are two separate villages located on the main A419 London Road between Stroud and Cirencester in the Frome Valley.

The following information on Brimscombe is taken from its Wikipedia page:

"Brimscombe was an important local centre during the Industrial Revolution with its canal and rail links, with Brimscombe Port serving as the hub of the Thames and Severn canal.

Brimscombe Port was originally built to transfer cargo from Severn Trows, which travelled from the River Severn down the Stroudwater Navigation, to Thames barges which carried the goods eastwards towards London. This was necessary because the locks to the east of the port were too narrow to accommodate the larger sea-going Trows. There were also several boat-building yards at the port, including Abdela & Mitchell, who exported boats, notably paddle steamers, all over the world. According to recent on-the-ground research the legendary riverboat 'Queen of Africa' which gave a star performance in the John Huston movie *The African Queen* was built at the Abdela & Mitchell Brimscombe works between 1908 and 1911.

Many of the Abdela & Mitchell river-boats went to the Nile, the Niger and other African rivers, and especially to the Peruvian Amazon and other Amazonian tributaries. The Abdela river-boats were highly regarded for their elegance, shallow draft (often less than 40cm), and flexibility, viz the 'Adis Ababa' for Lt-Col John Harrington's White Nile/Ethiopia expedition of 1903 - 'boiler arranged to burn oil, coal or wood'. Lesley Abdela who lives in East Sussex is the last direct descendant bearing the name of the Victorian/Edwardian shipbuilding family which owned yards on the Manchester Ship Canal, Queen's Ferry, and Brimscombe. Her marine architect grandfather Isaac Abdela was the proprietor of the Abdela & Mitchell shipyards when the 'Queen of Africa' was built at Brimscombe. The

Shipyards announced themselves as 'Contractors to The Admiralty, War Office, India Office And Allied Governments'.

Until the construction of what is now the A419 road along the bottom of the valley in 1815, Thrupp Lane was the main thoroughfare between Stroud and Chalford. The condition of this road was such that it required a whole day for a team of horses to draw a loaded waggon and return, a distance of only four miles each way.

Brimscombe railway station was opened on 1 June 1845 as part of the Cheltenham and Great Western Union Railway from Swindon to Gloucester. It closed on 2 November 1964, and the nearest station is now at Stroud.

The former port is to be regenerated as part of the canal restoration project by the Cotswold Canals Partnership. This will require considerable engineering expertise as much of the basin has been infilled and in places factories have been built over the canal. Initially the canal is planned to become navigable from Brimscombe Port to the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. Plans are in place, and much activity being undertaken to restore the whole length of what is now known as The Cotswold Canals, eastwards from Brimscombe to Inglesham on the Thames."

The ground is located on London Road is very easy to spot, helped by a large sign that is clearly visible whether coming from either direction. We drove past the ground with the intention of finding a pub to have somewhere to eat. Despite the Ship Inn being close to the ground we ended up in the sleepy town of Minchinhampton. With the only pub that we saw being The Crown it narrowed down our choices somewhat and we had a pleasant lunch and pint. While having lunch it started to rain but our fears were allayed as within around fifteen minutes to kick-off it stopped and the game was played out in glorious sunshine.

You enter the ground from the main road and the car park is to the right with the clubhouse and changing rooms to the left. We were charged £3 for admission which included a 28-page programme. This was a ground that I liked immediately with the pitch being set below road level with a stand set into the grass bank that runs along the near side. There is also another grass bank behind the far goal. Behind the ground are industrial units, railway line, Thames & Severn Canal and the hills of the southern Cotswolds. When the sun came out it was a superb setting to watch football and it is doubtful whether I will get to a more pleasant one all season.

The game was an entertaining one right from the start with both teams always looking to go forward. It was also competitive without a niggly element that often creeps into games. The first half was primarily determined by the keepers - Hook Norton's Matt Dixon made two excellent saves while two errors at the other end cost Brimscombe two goals. The opening goal came after just nine minutes when a cross field ball was misjudged by the Brimscombe keeper and Raymar da Silva headed the ball into an empty net. Hook nearly doubled their lead soon after when a Jamie Wyatt shot well saved following good work on the left from the ever dangerous da Silva. Hook's second goal of the afternoon came just after the

half hour mark. Danny Poole took advantage of a mix-up between the home keeper and a couple of his defenders on the edge of the penalty area, and rolled the ball into the unguarded goal.

Within a minute or two of the restart Jonny da Silva nearly put the game to bed but his shot was cleared off the line. The first twenty minutes of the half saw the home side have their best spell in terms of possession but did not seem to have the nous (or ability?) to break down the Hook defence. With the visitors seemingly in a comfortable position Brimscombe were awarded a free kick on the edge of the penalty area with twenty minutes remaining. John Dalton stepped up and curled it round the wall into the net with Matt Dixon rooted to his spot. Game on? Well, all it did was wake up the visitors and, in the end, they should have had a couple of more goals as they created two excellent chances. Firstly, some superb harrowing of the home defence their #10 rounded the keeper only to see his shot cleared off the line, and secondly when the ball fell kindly to Danny Poole inside the Brimscombe penalty area he dragged his shot wide with only the keeper to beat.

It was a cracking day out at a lovely little venue that is well worth a visit, and with traffic being light on the motorways I was home by 8pm.

07/20