

**TT No. 125: Rob Champion** - Saturday 31st December 2011; **Spratton** 2-4 James King Blisworth; Northants Comb Division 1; Venue: Smith Street, NN6 8HW; Admission/Programme: none; Attendance: peaked at 23; Entertainment rating: 6/10.

After a two-week break from watching football for Christmas I am in Northamptonshire for my final game of 2011. With Oadby Town not playing until Monday, good friend Kevin Zupp agreed to come with me and I picked him up from his house in Kibworth at lunch time for the forty-minute drive south. The drive was very straightforward taking the A6 to Market Harborough before heading onto the A508 to Northampton. We turned off the A508 at Brixworth and headed westwards to Spratton itself, with Smith Street being on the northern edge of the village.

Spratton is a small village and civil parish in the Daventry district of Northamptonshire and according to the 2001 census had a population of 1,099 inhabitants. It is located on the A5199 (previously A50) that runs between Leicester (25 miles to the north) and Northampton (7 1/2 miles to the south).

If going by their club badge Spratton Football Club were formed in 1890. There is very little information on the club on the internet, and the only details that I have come across are on the archive section of the Northants Combination website. Their records go back as far as the 1953/54 season and Spratton finished in 5th position in the premier division. It is only from 1973 (apart from the 1990/91 season) that they have a full set of league tables. Apart from three seasons between 1988 and 1991 the club have spent the past thirty-eight years in either the premier division or division one. The club have been crowned premier division champions on two occasions in 1984/85 and 1986/87. In the last ten years in the Northants Combination Division they have finished: 2001/02 - 8th; 2002/03 - 8th; 2003/04 - 5th; 2004/05 - 7th; 2005/06 - 6th; 2006/07 - 13th; 2007/08 - 12th; 2008/09 - 12th; 2009/10 - 12<sup>th</sup> and 2010/11 - 10<sup>th</sup>.

When arriving at the venue we found it to be typical for this level with no pitch side facilities but there is a social club on site which appeared to be well used by the local community. On one of the walls there was a few of old team photos with a couple catching my eye in particular. The first was from 1957 when they had silverware on show for winning both the Northants Combination Division 1 title and cup competitions. The second was from the 1929/30 season with the headline "Mid-Northamptonshire Village League winners". It is a shame that information like this is not preserved in either the print form or online.

On the day the game pitched bottom of the table Spratton against high flying James King Blisworth who lie second in the table. It was played in dry but very blustery conditions with the location being very exposed to the elements. It was one of the most competitive games that either of us had seen with no quarter given from either side. Spratton took the lead within a couple of minutes when a

mistake in the visiting defence allowed Adam Lett to poke the ball past the keeper into an empty net. On the half hour mark and they made it 2-0 when Joe Savage took advantage of some indecision in the Blisworth goal and finished from a couple of yards out. Right at the end of the half Blisworth got a goal back from the penalty spot. Chris Cully was fouled, got up and put his side back into the game. The Spratton keeper was very close to turning it round the post but despite getting a hand to it could not turn it round the post. To be honest Spratton should have been three up as their #9 blasted the ball over from eight yards out in what was probably the best chance of the half for either side. After an excellent save from the Blisworth keeper in the opening ten minutes of the half, the visitors took control and scored three goals in the space of fifteen minutes which ultimately resulted in the victory. Firstly, a corner was knocked back across goal to allow Steve Hearly draw the teams level just before the hour mark. Blisworth's third goal came on the seventy minute mark when following a corner a Jay Vieira (?) shot from the edge of the area took a couple of deflections before finding the net, and just two minutes later it became 2-4 when a back pass sold the Spratton keeper short which was read by the Blisworth #14 who rounded the stranded keeper and finished into an empty net. The visitors saw out the final fifteen minutes or so to give them a victory in their quest for promotion to the premier division.

A final note should go to the people behind the scenes at Spratton Football Club itself. They made us both feel welcome right from the start and even allowed me to charge up my camera battery for half an hour, as when we arrived, I found it dead as a dodo.

07/20