

TT No.128: Justin Holmes - Sat 31st December 2011; **Chesham United** v Arlesey Town; Southern League Prem Division; Venue: The Meadow, Chesham; Score: 2-0; Admission: £9.00; Programme: £2.00; Attendance: 375; Match Rating: 3.

On my way home from Cheltenham, I decided to make a detour once I arrived in London Paddington for a one-hour tube journey along the Metropolitan Line into Buckinghamshire for what would be my final game of 2011.

The Meadow is located about a 20-minute walk from Chesham London Underground station, through the very pleasant town centre en route, which is well worth spending some time in before a match. On entering the ground, it came as a very pleasant surprise, being a good old-fashioned non-league ground with some pleasant background as well. Along one length of the pitch are steep steps of terracing, to the back of which is a large clubhouse between the entrance in the corner and the small main all-seater stand, which straddles the half way line and set behind the terracing. Along the other length are further terrace steps, with basic cover sheltering the middle two thirds. Behind one of the goals is a modern metallic stand for standing room only, and behind the other goal is a small covered area, behind which is the pleasant backdrop of rolling tree lined hills very close by. The programme, printed on glossy paper and with 20 pages of meaningful, non-advertising material, was a reasonable effort in informing readers of the background to the game today. Seen better, but seen much worse at this level.

Going into this game, Chesham United are again "there or thereabouts" in the play-off positions, in fifth place, after finishing one place outside of the play-offs in sixth place last season. Their recent form has not been good though, picking up just three points from three draws from their last five games. After being promoted as Champions from the Central Division of the Southern League last season, life has been tougher for Arlesey Town this season, and they found themselves in 18th place in the 22 team league, and they also have not been in good form recently, picking up just a win and a draw from their last five games.

The game was surprisingly even during the opening half hour, with the visitors possibly shading possession and chances, however on 32 minutes it was the home side who took the lead, when a long looping cross from the left wing was headed back over the keeper and into the net by Simon Thomas despite the best efforts of a backtracking defender. Five minutes later and Chesham doubled their lead with a lovely goal, when Steve Wales ran onto a through ball, jinked past a couple of defenders before delicately dinking the ball over the onrushing keeper and into the net.

Arlesey could consider themselves fairly unlucky to be two goals in arrears at half time, but in the second half, they very rarely threatened to get back in the game. The game became a midfield battle with defences very much on top, which obviously suited Chesham, who had a couple of gilt edged chances to extend their

lead further, but their two first half goals were sufficient to win the game and lift them up to second place in the table going into the new year, whilst Arlesey slip into the relegation places, in 19th place.

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