

TT No.191: Rob Champion - Sat 17th March 2012; **OSSETT TOWN 0-1 WITTON ALBION**; Northern Prem League Div. 1 N; Venue: Ingfield, Prospect Road, WF5 9HA; Adm: £7; Prog: £2; Team sheet: Free; Badge: £3 - on order; Att: 113.

Today sees a rare trip up to the Peoples Republic of Yorkshire for a visit to Ossett Town Football Club. This was not my original plan as I had penciled a game in the more local Northants Combination, but this suggestion from good friend Kevin Zupp who wanted to visit the ground before the bulldozers cometh. It was also agreed the double up with an FA Premier Academy game at Sheffield United which kicked off at 11.30am. I picked Kev up from Oadby Town FC in the morning and we set off, with the weather being drizzly and the forecast of sunshine and showers for the rest of the day. In fact, the only rain we encountered was on the way home.

Ossett itself is a market town in West Yorkshire and lies within the City of Wakefield Metropolitan Borough. The town is located roughly half way between Dewsbury (3 miles to the west) and Wakefield (3 1/2 miles to the east) and sits just off junction 40 of the M1 motorway. The population of the town is around 21,500.

The football club were formed in 1936 and joined the Leeds League (later West Yorkshire League) until the outbreak of World War 2. During the war they played in the Heavy Woollen League, when after the cessation of hostilities in 1945 they became members of the Yorkshire League. Ossett remained members of the Yorkshire League until 1982 when it merged with the Midland Counties League to form the Northern Counties East League (NCEL). For the inaugural season they were placed in Division 1 North and finished in 6th place. Following league reorganisation a few years later they won the division 2 title and were promoted to division 1. A year later and Town were promoted for a second successive season after a 3rd place finish. After a number of years which can be described as consolidation in the premier division Town were promoted again in 1999 after a runners-up position secured their place in the Northern Premier League (NPL) Division 1. Just three years later and another runners-up position saw them promoted again to the premier division of the NPL. In the nine seasons spent in the premier division Ossett's highest finish came in the 2006/07 season when they ended the season in 10th place. Following relegation in the summer to division 1 north they currently sit in 16th place recording nine wins in their thirty-two league games played. Current form though is very poor as there has been only one victory in the last ten games. This came on the 18th February when Clitheroe were dispatched 2-0. Last time out Salford City came away from Ossett with a 2-0 victory on Tuesday night.

Their opponents today have made the trek across from Northwich and sit in 3rd place in the league table, finding themselves eight points behind leaders Curzon Ashton. Their form since the turn of the year has been mixed but have won their last two league matches - 6-0 @ Bamber Bridge and 1-0 @ Clitheroe respectively.

The ground is easy to find being just five minutes from junction 40 of the M1 motorway. There is no parking for spectators at the ground but there is a (very) cheap public car park opposite which cost us 80p for four hours. The turnstile entrance is on Prospect Road itself and we were charged £7 for admission and a further £2 for a 32-page programme. The admission charge is what I was expecting but the programme was certainly not worth the money. On entering the ground, the social club is front of you to the right with the pitch to the left. There are three sets of cover - 1) a large seated stand on the Prospect Road side of the ground; 2) a section of covered standing on the far side next to the dugouts and 3) a small section of cover on the near side in front of the changing rooms. It is easy to understand why the land is earmarked for retail development with it being in a prime location in the town. When the club will move though is another matter as they will only relocate when the offer is right for the club, not the developer.

The game was one to forget with it being one of the worst I have seen at any level all season. Very few chances were created and very little football played. The only goal of the game came around the twenty-minute mark. Ossett keeper Ashley Connor took a goal kick which was intended for Mark Ryan, though Ryan had decided to run upfield at the precise moment the kick was taken. Albion's Ashley Stott was the first to react and he calmly placed the ball past Connor. Cue chants of dodgy keeper from the visiting supporters behind the goal. In the second half, which was worse than the first Ossett resorted to hitting hopeful balls with the visitors easily containing their efforts. I was bored watching this long before the final whistle ended the afternoons proceedings, and was glad to get back in the car to make the ninety-mile drive home.

A final note should be that of our first game of the day at the Sheffield United Academy. United welcome spectators to attend their academy games and there were around 65 people watching the under-18 game. Both games were on adjacent pitches and there is a "snack shack" serving drinks and hot food. There was no admission charge or programme/team sheet issued.

07/20