

TT No. 198: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 24th March 2012; **Bosham** v Rottingdean Village; Sussex County League Division Three; Venue: Walton Lane, Bosham; Score: 0-2; Admission: None; Programme: £2.00; Attendance: 50; Match Rating: 4.

With glorious warm sunshine putting in an appearance today, I fancied a trip to the countryside for a grassroots game at a peaceful, village setting, and so I considered it an ideal opportunity to tick off one of the three remaining grounds I had yet to visit in the Sussex County League Division Three (and indeed, in the whole of the Sussex County League) with a trip to the western extremity of West Sussex.

Walton Lane is located about a twenty-minute walk south from Bosham rail station, and facilities are basic, which will prevent the team from getting promoted back into senior football. Indeed, it has frustrated them recently, as they were Champions the season before last but were denied promotion, when apparently their facilities did not meet the criteria for the league they were in, let alone Division Two. The football pitch is part of a recreation ground, and one walks through a play area to get to the pitch - indeed, the play area comes up close to the pitch along one half of the length of the pitch. On the other length, tucked towards the corner, is the very old fashioned but extremely welcoming clubhouse and tea bar, with cover stretching from the clubhouse to the pitch-side railing, providing the only cover at the ground. This is the only length of pitch that is railed, spectators are seemingly not intended to watch the game around the rest of the pitch, and there is no hard standing. There are also no floodlights here. The ground and the setting are not hugely memorable in all honesty, although a friendlier welcome and atmosphere would be very hard to find. Programmes were available from the tea bar, and was very good for the level of football, containing all the essentials to inform oneself of the background to the game ahead.

In truth, there is little left to play for both today's teams this season. Bosham went into today's game in twelfth place in the sixteen-team league, disappointing after their recent successful seasons, but are 14 points clear of a potential relegation place having played less games than the teams currently occupying those berths. Their recent form has not been good, having picked up just two points from their last four games, all at home, although before that run they did beat leaders Newhaven away. Rottingdean Village were in seventh place, but six points adrift of sixth placed Barnham and eighteen points behind leaders Newhaven (their lack of facilities also means promotion is not a consideration for them). Their recent results have also not been the best, winning one and losing three of their last four games. When the two teams met earlier in the season Rottingdean emphatically won 7-1 - after Bosham had taken the lead with less than a minute on the clock.

On a warm, sunny but hazy afternoon, the first half was an entertaining affair, with both sides doing plenty of attacking, first of all the Bosham keeper pulled off a couple of excellent point blank reflex saves to keep Rottingdean at bay, then

Bosham had a couple of excellent chances, firstly when a forward drew the keeper wide of goal but his delicate lob hit the crossbar, then a one on one was saved by the keeper's legs. On 39 minutes, it was Rottingdean Village who took the lead when a low cross was played into the box and the forward just beat the keeper to flick the ball home. Rottingdean kept their slender lead at the interval, which was deserved as their forward line looked dangerous throughout the first half with their pace often too much for the Bosham back line.

Bosham came out in the second half on the front foot, yet on 53 minutes, Rottingdean doubled their lead when a Bosham defender dallied on the ball and was dispossessed, and the forward strode forward before powering a shot across the keeper and into the net. Soon after, Bosham had a great chance to equalise when their forward broke clear for a one on one with the keeper but he blazed over the bar when he could have passed to his fellow forward. They had a couple of other reasonable chances to get back in the game, although with ten minutes left on the clock, Rottingdean hit the post. In the closing minutes, Bosham had a couple of fierce drives at goal saved by the keeper, but in the end, it was the away team who claimed a victory which they deserved for looking the more convincing and composed team, although the game really could have gone either way. Both teams remained where they were in the table.

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