

TT No.27: *Justin Holmes* - Mon 29th August 2011; **Farnham Town v Badshot Lea**; Combined Counties League Prem Division; Venue: The Memorial Ground, Farnham; Score: 5-1; Admn: £6.00; Prog: £1.00; Att: 70 (estimate); Match Rating: 4.

Bank Holiday Mondays can only mean one thing for me - a double fix of football, starting off with a morning kick-off in the Combined Counties. The decision was a tough one today, only very late the previous evening did I finally decide on a trip to south-west Surrey and a visit to The Memorial Ground, home of newly promoted Farnham Town for their very local derby against Badshot Lea, based just a couple of miles away from Farnham.

The Memorial Ground is located about a fifteen minute from Farnham rail station, walking through the town centre en route. The ground is located very close to the town centre and nestled amongst housing, although the ground is still quite roomy. Despite its urban location, the ground is quite roomy. One can enter either side of the pitch - the main entrance takes one past the clubhouse with a nice patio area in front and a large grass area up to the hard standing around the pitch. Along the opposite length of the pitch is a small area of cover to one side of the dugouts, and to the other is where the players enter the ground, with the changing rooms located outside of the ground. The area behind one of the goals is significantly higher compared to the rest of the ground, which makes for a good vantage point to watch the action. There is also a small stand painted in club colours with two rows of seating, but the view is not good when seated in this stand, as the pitch perimeter fencing significantly obstructs one's view. The area behind the other goal is not accessible within the ground, but makes for a great place to watch the action for free if one is so inclined with so through fencing close to the edge of the pitch. It is a ground that appealed to me without really being able to put my finger on the reason why, other than it has some uniqueness and is smart and tidy. A basic 16-page programme covered all the essential information and little more, and it has a very attractive cover design and is neatly produced inside.

Farnham Town have had a reasonable if unspectacular start back in the Premier Division of the Combined Counties League having won promotion by finishing in second place in the First Division last season, claiming just two points from their opening four games before winning on Saturday at Wembley, and they had an excellent win against Premier League Champions Guildford City in the FA Cup. Badshot Lea, one of the fancied teams this season, have had a very good start to the season, with three wins and a draw from their opening five games, after finishing sixth in the Premier Division last season.

So, the visitors would probably have been considered slight favourites for this match, although form is often quite irrelevant in derby matches. Indeed, they looked the better side in the opening exchanges, however on ten minutes it was the home side who took the lead thanks to a bullet near-post header by Mark Corbett from a corner. Ten minutes later and Farnham doubled their advantage

following another corner, when the keeper seemed to misjudge the flight of the ball and could only fumble the ball on and Matt Bunyan stabbed home from very close range at the far post. Ten minutes later, and Badshot Lea struck the bar. Five minutes before half time and the Badshot Lea manager made a Mourinho style tactical double substitution. Within a minute though, the visitors found themselves three goals in arrears, yet again they could not deal with a corner, and a header appeared to cross the line before being blocked, however Bunyan made sure by thumping home from 12 yards.

It was quite a remarkable score-line at half time, and in truth Farnham should have scored at least a couple more with a couple of unbelievable close-range misses, although the visitors had not actually played that badly. To have any chance of getting anything from the game, they would need to score early in the second half, and on 57 minutes a long range shot was needlessly spilt by the Farnham keeper, and in rushing to retrieve the loose ball, brought down the Badshot Lea forward and a penalty was awarded, and was converted with a powerful shot into the bottom right hand corner giving the keeper no chance. The visitors now had a sniff, and the game remained open with both sides having chances to add to the score-line. On 72 minutes, Farnham put the game to bed when a perfectly judged through ball was played, putting Corbett through one-on-one with the keeper, and he showed good composure to slot the ball low into the net. They had numerous other gilt edged chances to add to the score-line, although it was not until deep into added-on time that they managed to add a fifth, Corbett smashing home the penalty high straight down the middle after a driving run into the box drew a foul, for his 49th goal in just 51 games since joining the club - a mightily impressive record at any level of senior football.

So a comprehensive derby day victory for Farnham Town, and the victory was deserved for a team that showed good movement, understanding and desire, although the score-line was harsh on Badshot Lea, who actually played quite well and deserve considerable credit for still showing good application even by the time defeat was inevitable and they certainly played their part in a very entertaining game of football.

07/20