

TT No.76: Rob Campion - Sat 22nd October 2011; Clifton 0-2 AFC Hucknall; Central Midlands League Division - South; Venue: Norman Archer Memorial Grd, Green Lane, Nottingham; Admission: £2 with prog; Att: b/n 35-40; Match rating: 3*.

A trip up to Nottinghamshire is the order of the day with Clifton being one that was on a shortlist of four - the other three being clubs in the Notts Senior League. There was another factor in my choice of game today and that was meeting up with Rob Hornby who was previously the Central Midlands League (CML) registrar. I owed Rob £16 for a copy of the new edition of the *Non-League Yearbook* and we had previously arranged to meet up on this date about a month ago - it was just a case of where as I was waiting for Rob to confirm his plans. I had also roped in my dad to make the short drive north for this game against fellow Nottinghamshire side AFC Hucknall. Just for the record it was to be my 400th venue that I have seen football at.

At the start of the season Clifton's Norman Archer Memorial Ground was one of five in the newly reorganised South Division of the CML that I had not previously visited. The others being Pinxton (Welfare Ground), Belper United (Alton Manor), Bulwell Town (Bestwood Workshops) and Whatton United (Spa Lane). Pinxton were visited in pre-season and the latter two folded soon after the season started. So after today it just leaves Belper United and I'm sure I will pay them a visit at some point during the season, more than likely after Christmas. For the record (and not wanting to feel like the other division is being left out) there are four grounds in the North Division that I have not been to. They are Hutton Cranswick United (Rotsea Lane), Westella & Willerby (Bishop Burton College), Harworth Colliery Institute (Scrooby Road) and Dronfield Town (Stonelow Playing Fields).

About Clifton

Clifton is shall we say a piece of piss to get to from Leicester with it being a large estate on the south side of Nottingham. It is located alongside the main A453 which runs from Nottingham city centre to junction 24 of the M1. The estate was built in the 1950's and was at one time the largest council estate in Europe. The term "Clifton" also refers to Clifton Village and Clifton Grove. Clifton Village is a small, picturesque residential area of approximately 200 homes set alongside the River Trent. The village green houses a dovecote, the Old School House and Village Hall. A number of older properties which include the Old Rectory and village church lie along Village Road which runs from the green to Clifton Hall. Clifton Hall is a Grade 1 Listed Building. The history of the hall goes back to the 11th century but was remodelled in the late 18th century in a Georgian style. It was owned by the Clifton family from the late 13th century to the mid-20th century. In 2008 the hall rose to tabloid prominence when it was reported that its millionaire owner and his family had left the house because they believed it was haunted. It was repossessed and is currently on the market for £2.75m.

The Nottingham trams system (NET - Nottingham Express Transit) has been given permission to build two new lines, one of which (line 2) will connect Clifton to the city centre.

“The 7.6 km route with 13 tram stops will link directly with NET Line One at Nottingham Railway Station on a new viaduct allowing people to transfer between trams, trains and other forms of transport. The route will run along Queens Walk through the Meadows, over the River Trent along Wilford Toll Bridge and mainly along the former Great Central railway line between Wilford and Compton Acres/Ruddington Lane. It will then run to the south of Silverdale and into Clifton along Farnborough Road and Southchurch Drive serving Clifton Centre, before terminating at a new Park and Ride site providing approximately 1,000 car parking spaces close to the A453 and junction 24 of the M1 motorway.

Through journeys onto NET Line One will be possible, allowing passengers to travel from Clifton to the Old Market Square, Royal Centre and beyond, for example, without the need to change trams.”

About Clifton Football Club (taken from their official website:
www.cliftonfc.co.uk)

“Clifton All Whites was founded in 1963, originally under the name of Thistledown Rovers. The clubs founder members include Mr Dick Lambert and Mr Bill Norwell.

During the 1960's and 1970's Clifton All Whites dominated youth football in Nottinghamshire by attracting the best players from all over the county, now most players are local. There is no doubt Clifton All Whites led the way in developing youth football in Nottingham. In 1963 there were only four teams in the Young Elizabethan League, and as the exploits of the club developed, and publicised, more teams and clubs were founded, many with advice and help from Clifton All Whites.

By 1966 plans were underway for Clifton All Whites to test their skills abroad in a tournament in Holland. In those days, tours were unheard of. Success after success followed both home and abroad. In the early days when football clubs only usually supplied shirts for their players a new standard was set as Clifton All Whites supplied a full ALL WHITES STRIP. Another first was when the under 12's played a top Scottish team before a crowd of over 20,000 before a Forest v Newcastle game, full time ending 15 minutes before kick-off of the first division game.

Two quotes are remembered from that day. Police Inspector “The easiest days policing this year, not one arrest”. Scottish spectator “If Clifton play half as good as they look, we are in for a hiding”.

Professional clubs clamoured to persuade Clifton All Whites to become a nursery club, but still the club policy is not to become tied to any one club. David Stainforth was the first player to make a career as a professional footballer, with Sheffield United.

Constantly Clifton All Whites performed well in FA Youth Cup games, beating many Professional teams. It was no surprise that with an enthusiastic and hard-working committee their own ground became a reality, quickly followed by a venture out of youth football to senior football at the highest level into the Midland League.

Mick Walker, who went to Notts County was the first Club Manager and Coach, and what a brilliant find he was. His professionalism and skills helped make the transition a successful one.

Whilst other clubs have come and gone Clifton All Whites are still thriving with teams from under 8's to seniors and in 1999 Clifton All Whites introduced the first girls' team. The success of the club over the years has been due to hard working committee plus the continued support of some great team managers and parents."

The first team having previously been members of the Midland League, Notts Alliance and (founder members of) the Notts Senior League (NSL) joined the CML in the summer of 2011 along with three other NSL sides; Basford United, Bilborough Pelican and Nottinghamshire Police. The seven years spent in the NSL resulted in one second place finish (2005/06) and in 2010 won the league championship. This season Clifton currently sit in fourth place in the South Division table having won six of their ten league games played. Opponents AFC Hucknall sit in twelfth place recording three wins from their eleven games played.

The Norman Archer Memorial Ground is located on the eastern edge of Clifton on Green Lane, with the boundary of the neighbouring village of Ruddington and Rushcliffe parish being literally "the other side of the hedge". If coming from Ruddington the entrance is on the right just before the island with Farnborough Road. We were welcomed on arrival and were charged £2 each admission which included the programme - which is a folded sheet of thick A4 paper into A5 size. An added bonus was that on production of the programme at the tea hut you got a free tea or coffee. On site there is a spacious clubhouse with the pitch having a stand straddling the half line on the far side, with the dugouts sitting in front of it.

The game was played in glorious sunshine and on paper one would have expected a comfortable home win. In fact, what we got was a fairly scrappy first half with few chances being created. The first notable opening came just after twenty minutes when Clifton's Stuart Robinson took a quick free kick that found Danny Prance unmarked but he dragged his shot wide. Just before the half hour mark Michael Evans forced Hucknall keeper James Beddingham to save low at his near post. A minute later and it was the visitors turn to threaten but Scott Peach curled his shot wide of Scott Clay's goal. A minute before half time and Hucknall took the lead - deservedly so as Austin Wallace flicked the ball following a cross from the left. The second half was more open and inside the opening minute the visitors should have been two up, but a header was a week effort that went into Clay's hands. Clifton gradually took control and in the space of a couple of minutes hit the woodwork twice and had an effort cleared off the line. With around five minutes remaining Hucknall broke on the counter attack down the right. Wallace played the ball across and it found its way to Peach who cut inside and curled a

lovely shot into the bottom right hand corner of the goal. The final chance of the afternoon came to hosts but having controlled the ball Will Heath blasted over.

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