

**TT No.116: *Rob Champion*** - Sat 2nd March 2013; **Uttoxeter Town** v Chesterton AFC; Staffs County Senior League 1; Venue: Oldfields Sports Club, Springfield Road, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire; Admission: Free; Programme: £1; Attendance: counted around 80 pitch-side, but more stayed at the pavilion.

Leading up to the weekend I was having a case of football burnout with having watched over sixty games this season so far, and god forbid even contemplating even not watching a game today. But after getting home from work Friday morning I was mulling things over in my head, and for some reason the name Uttoxeter Town came into my mind - no idea why or how but it did. I remember earlier on in the season reading about the club on the Non-League Matter forum and the reports were very favourable, so thought I would venture into new territory football wise and hopefully re-energise myself for the final three months of the football season.

Uttoxeter is a market town and civil parish in the district of East Staffordshire with a population of around twelve and a half thousand. It is located some twenty miles west of Derby, fourteen miles south east of Stoke-on-Trent and twenty miles north of Lichfield. The following history on the town is taken from the Wikipedia page: Uttoxeter's name has had 79 spellings since it was mentioned in the Domesday Book as "Wotocheshede": it probably came from Anglo-Saxon Wuttuceshæddre = "Wuttuc's homestead on the heath". Some historians point to pre-Roman settlement here and Bronze Age axes have been discovered in the town (now in display in the Potteries Museum in Stoke-on-Trent). It is possible that Uttoxeter had some form of Roman activity due to its strategic position on the River Dove and closeness to the large garrison forts at Rocester between 69 and 400 AD., and recently discovered fort at Stramshall, though little collaborating archaeology has been found.

Uttoxeter also saw the last major royalist surrender of the English Civil War, on 25 August 1648, when James Hamilton, 1st Duke of Hamilton surrendered to Parliamentarian General John Lambert. Perhaps the most famous event to have occurred in Uttoxeter is the penance of Samuel Johnson. Johnson's father ran a bookstall on Uttoxeter market, and young Samuel once refused to help out on the stall. When Johnson was older, he stood in the rain (without a hat) as a penance for his failure to assist his father. This event is commemorated with the Johnson Memorial, which stands in the Market Place, in the town centre and there is also an area of town called Johnson Road, which commemorates him.

Mary Howitt, the Quaker writer of the poem "The Spider and the Fly", lived in Uttoxeter for a long period of her life. The town influenced some of her poems and novels, as well as fuelling her love of natural history, which also featured in her books. Howitt Crescent, a residential road in the town, was named after her. Recently, three of her poems were displayed in the town's bus shelters by the Uttoxeter Arts Festival Committee (now defunct).

Bunting's brewery occupied a large area of the centre of the town since the Victorian era. It stopped producing beer in the 1930s after being bought by Bass Brewery of Burton upon Trent. The last remains of the brewery were demolished in the 1960s to make way for the Maltings shopping precinct and car park. The brewery clock was recently re-furbished and installed on the town hall.

In 1945, Joseph Cyril Bamford founded J C Bamford Excavators Limited in Uttoxeter, now known as JCB. The firm, based in the nearby village of Rocester, is the world's third-largest construction equipment manufacturer. The firm's first vehicle was a tipping trailer made from war-surplus materials, which J. C. Bamford built in a rented lock-up garage in Uttoxeter. The Bamford family had previously started Bamfords, later Bamford International Farm Machinery which was a large employer in the town from the end of the 19th century through to the early 1980s when it gradually went into decline before closing in 1986.

Uttoxeter celebrated its 700-year anniversary of the awarding of a Market charter (1308) in 2008, which underpins the market provision on Saturdays and Wednesdays in particular, and other festival markets. The 1308 charter followed a more general Royal Charter granted to the town's burgesses in 1252. The originals reside at the National Archives in Kew and the Deferrers Museum in Leicester.

The football club currently ply their trade in the division 1 of the Staffordshire County Senior League, having transferred over from the Burton & District Sunday League in the summer of 2012, a league in which they were crowned champions for the past two seasons. In both seasons they beat Edge Hill to the title, firstly in 2010/11 by three points and then last season by two points. This season they have taken to their new surroundings like a duck to water, currently sitting top of the division one table five points ahead of MMU. Impressive also is the fact that they remain unbeaten in their league campaign recording fifteen victories from sixteen matches, adding to this is a current winning streak of eleven in league fixtures. The latter of which came last Saturday (23rd February) when Congleton Athletic were beaten by the odd goal in seven.

The club play their home games at the Oldfields Sports Club which is located on the western side of the town. They share the facilities with both the cricket and rugby clubs.

Uttoxeter is very straight forward to get to from Leicester, firstly heading up the M1 motorway to junction 23a and then across on the A50 to the town itself. According to Google maps it should take around an hour to make the fifty-mile journey. Come Friday evening and I decided to see how much it would cost on the train, and it came out at £14 return going via Derby which is cheaper than going by car. O.k. it meant leaving out earlier to get a bus into Leicester and adding the cost of the bus fare would make it about the same price, but sometimes it is nice to leave the car at home.

I arrived on time in Uttoxeter around 1.15pm and the station is on the edge of the town adjacent to the racecourse. It didn't take long to walk into the centre itself, and having took one or two photos went into the JD Weatherspoon Outlet, The Old

Swan for a pint before heading to the football ground. For real ale drinkers there was four or five on tap, with a couple being guest ales. I don't recall the one I had but it was a decent dark beer all the same. Afterwards it took around ten minutes to walk to Oldfields, the entrance is through some gates with the pitches straight ahead and an impressive pavilion to the right. No admission was charged but a twelve-page programme was available for £1.

The game wasn't too bad an affair for what is the twelfth level of the English football pyramid. Leaders Uttoxeter wasted no time in putting their stamp on proceedings when Tommy Smith was fouled in the penalty area by Jon Wood after only a couple of minutes. With calls from the side-lines for a red card, the referee showed the offender a yellow one. Anyhow Uttoxeter couldn't take advantage as the resultant spot kick was put wide. The visitors took some heart from this let off and made life difficult for their high-flying hosts. On the balance of play during the next half hour Uttoxeter were just ahead on points, but you felt that once they got the first goal, they would run out comfortable winners. Going into the latter stages of the half and the breakthrough was made with Tommy Smith coolly slotting the ball past Craig Wilson in the Chesterton goal on thirty-eight minutes.

In the opening twenty minutes of the second half Uttoxeter turned the screw and put the game to bed as a contest, scoring three goals in the space of just eleven minutes. Firstly, after a shot was cleared off the line, the ball fell kindly to Gary Beardsley who's shot over Wilson went in off the underside of the bar on fifty-three minutes. Three minutes later and Smith got his second off the afternoon with a scrambled effort at the far post. Smith completed his hat trick on sixty-four minutes with a header when unmarked in the penalty area. To be fair to the visitors their pride kept them going and they deservedly got a consolation goal on seventy-six minutes. Andrew Smith slotting the ball past Alex Langridge at the far post from a few yards out. In the final fifteen minutes neither keeper was rarely troubled with most of the efforts being off target.

Overall an enjoyable afternoon out in East Staffordshire at a club that seem to be on the up, and a decent turn out from the locals to watch them.

04/20