

TT No. 156: *Andy Molden* - Weds 24th April 2013; **Crowmarsh Gifford v Saxton Rovers**; North Berks League Division 1; Result: 0-2; Attendance: 47.

League leaders Saxton Rovers FC are closing in on the North Berks League championship again, though Didcot Casuals could still catch them. Saxton after this win needed 7 points from their last three games to win the league presuming Didcot won all four of theirs. Saxton have not won the league since 2009/10 while Crowmarsh are current league champions but are only 4th this season.

Crowmarsh play in a delightful spot on the north bank of the Thames, Crowmarsh though a village in its own right is only a few hundred yards walk from Wallingford. The Crowmarsh ground used to be accessed via a small industrial estate but this has now been replaced by St Georges Road where a four-bedroom house is available at just 380K which for Wallingford is a snip.

Though living only 12 miles away I had never really walked around the area until before this game. It is a very nice town and the older buildings are very much in the Chilton style as opposed to the Cotswold style of Oxford. The bridge between Crowmarsh and Wallingford is a medieval road bridge and is 900 feet long and has 22 arches but these days the Thames only flows under the arches nearest to Wallingford as the river was tamed a few centuries ago. Walking around Wallingford is like being in an episode of *Midsomer Murders* or even *Bargain Hunt*, fine vistas of the building where the Causton players perform can be found just off of the market square. The only "supermarket" in the town is Waitrose and a pint of beer and a glass of diet coke costs £5 in a local pub.

The game was first class and a much higher standard than the Hellenic Premier game I had seen the night before. Some of the Saxton players would not be out of place at step 4. Saxton took the lead just before half-time. The second period was more or less all Saxton and they got a second near the end of the game.

The game was played on the second pitch in the complex as the first pitch was a bit rutted (I had seen a game on it some years ago when Wallingford played Bracknell in a friendly). Now that houses have been built next to the ground it will never be developed; to be frank a rail, dug-outs a couple of Atcost stands and lights would just be a blot on the landscape. I'm sure Saxton are not looking to go anywhere and are quite happy with their lot. The North Berks League will continue to be a very good (now) step 8 League, with a standard as good as step 6 or even in some cases 5 with some players who could easier play at step 4. They just don't want the hassle and travelling that happens higher up the Pyramid.