

TT No.37: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 6th October 2012; **Sidley United** v Selsey; Sussex County League Division One; Venue: The Gullivers, Sidley; Score: 1-1; Admission: £5.00; Programme: 50p; Attendance: 47; Match Rating: 4.

I had originally planned to dip into the East Sussex League today with a visit to Ninfield United or Hooe Sports, however heavy overnight rain meant that I did not fancy taking a chance on a village recreation ground. Instead, after confirmation that all three of Bexhill's senior clubs would be playing, I chose a revisit to The Gullivers, although my previous visit was six years ago.

The Gullivers is about a twenty-minute walk from Bexhill train station, just off Sidley high street, and regular buses ply the route. The ground is shared with the Cricket Club - however it still manages to retain an intimate, enclosed feel to the ground, something which is often lacking from such shared facilities. As one enters the ground, along the length of the pitch stretching to the right is a rather claustrophobic stand with a couple of terrace steps, with a low roof and the relatively tall enclosed dugouts built into the stand. Apparently, this stand is living on borrowed time though, as the club is hoping to replace it with a more modern and spacious version. An addition to the ground to my last visit was an all-seater prefab stand, positioned adjacent to the older stand. Behind one of the goals is hard standing, and one continues along that path between the clubhouse and cricket pitch to reach the tea bar, and another entrance to the ground. Along the other length of the pitch are temporary barriers, with no hard standing due to the cricket pitch. A stone wall provides the boundary from the tea bar to one corner of the ground behind the cricket pitch, up a steep incline to the other corner of the ground, and so indeed, one corner of the football pitch has quite a marked incline. Behind the remaining goal, hard standing only stretches from the length with the stands to the goal. Special mention must be made of the programme, for which only 50p is charged, a far fairer and more realistic price than the £1.00 or more that is usually charged at this level. And a very reasonable publication it is too, printed on glossy paper, with an attractive cover, has a very professional look throughout and contains all the basics one needs for the match.

Today's game would be between two apparently closely matched mid table teams, separated by one point and one place, but who are probably more looking over their shoulder than pushing towards glory. Sidley United were in 16th place in the 22-team league, and have picked up just one point from their last four games. Selsey were in better recent form, having picked up seven points from their last four games and were in 15th place having played a game less than Sidley.

The heavy overnight rain had given way to blue skies and bright sunshine during the day, although the rain had certainly left its mark, with the pitch suffering from the pre-match warm up and indeed it cut up badly as the game wore on, making conditions tricky to play football. The early stages were pretty even, Sidley probably just shaded it, although Selsey had to make a sub as early as the fourth

minute after an extremely robust - but fair - tackle. On 34 minutes, it was the home side who took the lead, when a rather ambitious long-range daisy cutter of a shot by Andy Hales took a deflection off a defender's boot and the ball fell to James Taylor, who lifted the ball over the keeper and into the net.

The score-line remained 1-0 to the home side, but in the second half, they seemed to lose their way somewhat and were reliant on some fantastic last-ditch tackles to prevent Selsey from scoring. However, Selsey did get an equaliser on 59 minutes. Straight after Sidley had a good chance to extend their lead, Selsey went straight down the other end and a shot across goal struck defender Jack Cooper and the ball rolled gently into the net for an own goal. Both sides pushed hard for a winner for the remainder of the pitch - it appeared most likely to come from Selsey, although they seemed to lack ideas in the final third, and it was Sidley who had the stand out chance, when Dominic Cooper saw his header hit the bar from a free kick five minutes from time. In the end, a point apiece was probably the right result and credit to both teams for producing a very entertaining game full of attacking endeavour and effort on a tricky, muddy pitch.

04/20