

TT No.80: Mike Latham - Tuesday 1 January 2013; Evo-Stik Southern League Division One Central; **Rugby Town 2-0** Daventry Town; Attendance: 376; Admission: £8; Programme: £2; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

This wasn't my intended destination as I set off on New Year's Day morning but a catalogue of postponements due to waterlogged pitches in the Midlands meant I travelled further than I thought. Fair play to Rugby Town, they make full use of Twitter and gave the invaluable information that the pitch was fine, the game definitely on. That was good enough for me, re-routed and went on to enjoy my visit to Butlin Road.

Easily reached from J1 of the M6, the ground is at the end of Butlin Road to the east of the town centre; a quiet residential area with municipal pitches on one side and a park at the end. Not having done my usual research I was unsure what to find on arrival and the splendour of Rugby Town's ground took me by surprise.

Parking was easy in a large club car park and for a tenner I gained admittance and an excellent club programme, with several fine articles and a host of interesting statistics and photographs, produced in a clever way. Of particular note were the informative pen pictures of the home players- invaluable to the neutral and a well-written obituary of the former Rugby player and manager, Jimmy Knox who sadly passed away over the Christmas period. This can also be found on the club website here: <http://www.rugbytownfc.com/2012-13/news/121231knox.htm> .

Mr Knox was obviously revered among the Rugby faithful, leading the club to the FA Vase success at Wembley in 1973 and taking them into the Southern League with several stirring FA Cup battles along the way. There was an impeccably observed minute's silence before the game and a sustained spell of applause in the fifth minute of the game in Mr Knox's memory.

From my past experience of watching Southern League football I went into the game with low expectations, but am happy to admit that the game was far better than I hoped. Rugby Town scored two second half goals to settle a hard-fought derby game against a Daventry side also in good recent form. The victory was Rugby's ninth league win in a row.

As for the ground, where football has been played since 1973, it's a real eye-opener. There is cover on all four sides, a superb cantilevered main stand (opened in 2003) with over five hundred seats and a shallow seated area opposite. The covered terrace behind one goal, backing onto allotments is as good as any I've seen in non-league football. There is a good tea bar and an excellent club house and the locals were all friendly. Daventry brought a good, few fans along with them and there was a good atmosphere. I really enjoyed the afternoon.

I understand that the football club has endured quite a few ups and downs over the years. The original Rugby Town folded at the end of the 1972-73 season and a

new club VS (Valley Sports) Rugby took up the mantle. This club was liquidated in 1993. Valley Sports was then the title of a re-formed club which became Rugby United in 2000 and Rugby Town in 2005. I can't profess to know the ins and outs of all this; all I would say from my visit that the club is undoubtedly on an upward curve, has an immaculately maintained ground which would be the envy of many clubs higher up the pyramid and a good infrastructure. I'd recommend a visit here.

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