

TT No.6: *Andy Gallon* - Sat 17th August 2013; **Easingwold Town** v Copmanthorpe; York League Prem Div; Res: 0-5; Att: 35 (h/c); Admission: Free; Programme: None; FGIF Match Rating: **.

THE HOP: Since relocating to York nearly five years ago (blimey, how time flies), I've driven through Easingwold on several occasions. Following the opening in 1994, of a by-pass on the A19 York-Thirsk road, many people no longer have to do this; a shame because Easingwold, splendidly isolated amid the Vale of York's fertile flatness, with green hills rising to north and east, is a delightful small town boasting numerous attractive Georgian buildings. It has more than 50 Grade II listed structures. Ideally, match day would have dawned warm and sunny, permitting a leisurely and pleasant exploration of Easingwold's charms, but unseasonal heavy rain, a chilling breeze and dark clouds ensured a last-minute dash from home was the sensible option.

THE CLUB: Well organised! Easingwold Town, formed in 1892, run numerous teams and since 2003 have been an FA Charter Standard Development Club. Their teams include three open age, seniors, women's (Easingwold Angels, founded in 2010), boys (under-sixes to under-16s), junior girls and under-15 girls. The junior section was established during the mid-Nineties. A good idea of the club's impressive history can be obtained from a superb collection of framed archive photographs and press clippings adorning the clubhouse walls. I particularly enjoyed the grainy action shots from a Sixties county cup final at Bootham Crescent, York. Town were founder members of the York League, one of four still playing in this step seven competition.

THE GROUND: Bull Hill, on the Stillington road, a quarter of a mile east of the town centre, must be one of the best set-ups in the five-division York Minster Engineering Football League (the competition's full title). The facilities owe much to grant aid from the Football Foundation. Hambleton District Council and local businesses chipped in, too. I gather getting on for £350,000 has been spent - and it shows. Bull Hill's main pitch has a tiny stand, with bench seating, on the north touchline. Without this shelter, I would have got soaked in the first half, during which it tipped down relentlessly. My broolly would have been unequal to the task. Opposite the stand is a matching pair of substantial dug-outs. The clubhouse, opened in 2007, is in the north-west corner. It contains four dressing rooms, a function room, kitchen, toilets and three separate stores, including one for the groundsman's equipment. Free parking - some of it on grass - is available behind the goal at the west end, adjacent to the Stillington road. The main pitch, one of seven at this rambling site, is roped off and partially floodlit.

THE PEOPLE: Not, I have to say, noticeably welcoming to strangers. As you'd expect in such a small place, everyone knew everyone (and, no doubt, each other's business). Generally, the locals were content to cluster in small knots, conversing only with familiar faces. Even in the clubhouse at half-time.

THE GAME: Rather too one-sided to be interesting, unfortunately. Last season, Copmanthorpe finished runners-up to champions Dunnington whilst Easingwold trailed in second-from-bottom. On this evidence, most of the Premier Division table will again separate these teams. Copmanthorpe, bigger, faster and more skillful, played plenty of thoughtful football and looked a decent side. Easingwold, on the other hand, offered very little. The visitors had secured the points by half-time, when they led 3-0, one goal a penalty. The second half was more even, and Cop's fifth goal came with virtually the last kick. The Easingwold keeper made several good saves throughout otherwise the margin of defeat for the hosts would have been even wider. The Copmanthorpe scorers, according to the online version of the York Press, were Mark Featherstone, Robin Bedford, John Patrick, Matty Bastock and player-manager Terry Hibbert. One aspect that really stood out was a lack of dissent towards the match officials. The referee's assessor, with whom I fell into brief conversation, told me the York League's clampdown on backchat was paying off. The message, he said, is getting across.

THE PROGRAMME: A paper-free zone. I doubt any clubs in this league issue.

THE VERDICT: If you feel the need to visit any club in the York League, Easingwold Town must rank amongst the better choices.

04/20