

**TT No.49: *Chris Freer*** - Sat December 27th 2014; **Ardley United v Kidlington**; Hellenic League Premier Division; Score: 1-2; Attendance: Estimate 50 or so; Entertainment value: 4/5.

The following morning starts like GroundHog Day. The iMac is on, the Twitter feeds are open, and I survey the options. Anything north is out because of all the lying snow and travel problems around Sheffield. London is an option with North Greenford United a Step 4 'need' but it's notorious for pitch inspection failures, while the possible 'double' with Wembley FC seems to have disappeared from the fixtures list! Confirmation when it comes that the North Greenford game is off turns me towards a good-looking fixture in the Hellenic Premier and a definite 'car' fixture - Ardley United v Kidlington. And so, I set off.

I won't detail all of the transport issues that sees me behind the wheel for five of the next seven hours, but suffice to say that I arrive at Ardley's ground - the Playing Fields - in time for the match and indeed a pre-match drink. Maybe it's the cold weather and clogged roads around the ground, which is just a stones' throw from Junction 10 of the manic M40, but the attendance for such a fixture seems quite low, with the club's elevated clubhouse virtually empty before the game. A shame really, as they serve a tasty drop of Rebellion IPA from beer-boxes mounted on the bar, and if that doesn't suit, there are bottles of Hook Norton ales too. Exactly what a football clubhouse should be offering, in stark contrast to Huntingdon the day before.

The ground itself is flat standing, with some wind protection from a row of tall trees down one side. There is a modest seated stand straddling the halfway line on that side, plus a four-step covered kit stand terrace behind one goal. The pitch itself looks reasonable for the time of year, although boasting a substantial end-to-end slope, if not quite to Berwick Rangers levels!

The match itself provides plenty of good entertainment. With Ardley well-placed in the Division, and visiting Kidlington just one off the top, there's the potential for a classic and although not quite that, the skill level is high with visiting winger Tommy Castle catching the eye. His early strike knocks United back, but they get more into the game and are unlucky not to be level before they are reduced to ten men halfway through the second half. Castle's second of the game shortly thereafter would seem to seal it, but United won't lie down, and having reduced the arrears through hard-working number 9 Rocky Johnson, trade blows with Kidlington to the end, both keepers earning their corn.

And so, the long trudge home. Only the two games over two days, but at least the inclement weather hasn't prevented me from my festive footy fix. It's back to the house to consume more leftovers, some of the stock of ale bought for me by understanding relatives, and, oh yes, to don the 'Bah Humbug' hat once again, just

in case anybody mistakenly thinks I'm actually enjoying myself! Merry Christmas and roll on the New Year!

There's more on my blog at: <https://flynn123.wordpress.com>

You Ho-Ho!

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