

TT No.74: Rob Campion - Sat 21st March 2015; **Oakham United** v Thorney; Peterborough & District League Premier; Venue: Rutland County College, Main Road, Barleythorpe, Rutland; Result: 2-3; Admn/Programme: None; Att: 29 (h/c).

Last season I managed for the first time to visit the last remaining grounds down to level 12 (step 8) in Leicestershire & Rutland. From then on one of my modest aims regarding my football watching is to keep on top of this. At the start of the 2014/15 season three completely new venues began being in use - two in Leicester and the one visited today. The other two in question were GNG's new ground on Braunstone Lane East in Leicester, The Riverside Football Ground, and the other the home of Thurnby Nirvana's youth and reserve teams, Hamilton Park on the north east side of the city. The first was visited before Christmas and the latter in early February.

I wasn't originally planning to go to a game this weekend as I was scheduled in to work both the Friday and Saturday nights, but having booked the last few days holiday up I took the Saturday as an unpaid day off, but this was due to having a function in the evening and not the football!!!

After having a few hours' sleep after work Saturday morning, I left my home just after midday and firstly headed to Oadby Town FC to pick up my travelling companion Kev Zupp. The traffic was very light heading east and we arrived at the ground around half an hour before the scheduled 2pm kick-off. The ground is very easy to find with it being signposted off the main road through the small village of Barleythorpe. The village is located no more than a mile north of Oakham station.

The ground which is located within the grounds of Rutland County College is currently a work in progress. Floodlights, wooden dugouts and a small wooden stand are all in place, while some hard standing and perimeter railing are partially done. The club have also been awarded a grant to erect fencing and enclose the ground in properly. This will allow them to charge an admission should they be successful in getting promotion to the United Counties League.

Oakham United are a club that I have seen play at two previous venues. Firstly, the Vale of Catmose College in Oakham itself, and the second when they hired the 3G pitch at Uppingham Community College last February due to their own pitch being unplayable. This season saw them move into their new facility in the neighbouring village of Barleythorpe which is located a mile north west of the town. On the field of play Oakham sit top of the Peterborough & District League Premier Division amassing fifty-eight points from their twenty-five games played so far. They currently are a point ahead of their nearest challengers, Coates Athletic but have played two games less. Opponents Thorney were promoted to the Premier Division in the Summer and at present find themselves in mid-table.

The game was entertaining for the neutral and saw the visitors put a dent in Oakham's promotion charge. After a cagey start from both teams Thorney took the

lead, but going into the final stages of the first half Oakham had deservedly equalised. Between the two goals the referee missed an off the ball incident which should have resulted in the Oakham #2 being shown a red card. With a few minutes remaining of the half the Oakham #5 got in front of a Thorney player in the penalty area and shielded the ball back to his keeper. The referee then awarded a penalty kick to the visitors and showed a red card to the Oakham player. This was in my opinion very harsh, and despite his frustrations the player was politely asking why but the referee refused to answer. Anyhow the penalty kick was converted and the visitors went in front at the half time interval 2-1 up.

The second half saw Oakham deservedly equalise and despite a man disadvantage looked likely winners for a good part. It was the visitors who ended up taking the three points as they hit Oakham on the counter attack late on in the game.

Overall Oakham are a welcoming club and we (myself and Kev) had a chat with their secretary and chairman before the game. Also, at the game were a couple of ground hoppers from Crewe and one of them like myself posts on the Non-League Matters forum under the tag of Rivington.

04/20