

**TT No.46: Ian Brown** - Sat 9th January 2016; Southern Comb Football League Div. One; **Mile Oak** 1-0 Saltdean United; Venue: Mile Oak Recreation Ground, Chalky Road, Portslade, Sussex. BN41 2WF; Admn: £5; Programme: £1; Badge: £3; Hot Drinks: 80p; Att: 30-ish & 3 dogs!

When the Mersey Mafia & the Sofa Bear convened at the designated meeting spot, it was decided a trip down to Sussex by the Sea was the day's location to head for with Steyning or Worthing United, with the 3G back-ups of Worthing (which would have been a re-visit for the Don of the Mafia) or Lancing. Journey down went quite smoothly, most probably down to the wet weather, quietest the motorway system had been seen for a while. After stopping at Warwick Services, I received a text from our contact in the East Midlands telling us that a lot of games had been called off and that Eastbourne & Newhaven were still on. So, I decided to have a look on twitter to see if any other games were on that were grass and not 3G, to our surprise Mile Oak tweeted that their game goes ahead after pitch inspection.

Mile Oak FC was formed in 1960 with the aim of providing football for the local community of Mile Oak, north of Portslade. The club has always been an integral part of the community to which it belongs. In 1986 a bold decision was made to leave the Brighton League to become a senior club in the Sussex County League, and an application was made to join the Southern Counties Combination League, which was a feeder into the Sussex 'pyramid'. The club said its farewells to the Brighton League in appropriate fashion by winning its league cup for the first time and "double up" with a Vernon Wentworth cup final victory. After just one season, the club won promotion to Division Three of the County League as champions. After five seasons, promotion was gained to Division Two in 1991-92, as runners-up to Hassocks, and then to Division One as champions in 1994-95. They stayed in this division for three seasons, and were relegated back to Division two in 1997-98. In 2005-06 the club won some silverware after defeating Sidlesham 1-0 in the Final of the Division Two Challenge Cup. In the 2008-09 season the club again gained promotion to Division one but only survived one season back in the top flight of the Sussex league.

To find the ground - A27 (Brighton Bypass) leave at A293 exit. Right at first roundabout, ground 1 mile on right. Parking in the Sports Centre opposite the ground (park) entrance. You cross the road, follow the path and ahead of you is set of steps which leads up the turnstile, as one of the mafia members has a mobility problem, a club official kindly advised that there was a step free access and he would meet us there, which was duly done. The Tea Bar was situated in the Pavilion which is below pitch level, you go past the steps which leads up to the turnstile.

As we got there early, we had a chat with club & match officials, very friendly they were too. The match officials were not in the first flush of youth, younger officials may have deemed the surface unplayable. The pitch is on a little plateau

and has hard surrounding on 3 sides. There is a small covered standing area which straddles the half way & small, covered seating area behind the goal at the turnstile end. Both structures be-decked in the Orange & Black colours of the club.

The game itself played in blustery conditions wasn't the best nor was it the worst seen this season. Jack Arnold won it for the hosts with a 32nd minute tap in. The rain came in the second half combined with the wind made playing difficult, one visiting player commented that running on the surface was akin to running in custard. Saltdean made chances but only one clear cut when Devante Davis didn't get enough on his far post header.

A good day out was had by all. Thanks to all at Mile Oak making us welcome.

04/20