

TT No.84: Steve Hardy - Tues 3rd May 2016; **AEI Rugby** 1 Dunlop 0; Coventry Alliance Premier Division; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: varied between 13 and 25.

The Coventry Alliance is a former works league, although unlike other works leagues around the country it is actually flourishing. My visit today was to watch two long standing works teams who have adapted well to the changes that have been thrust upon them over the years.

AEI Rugby groundshare at the magnificent Rugby Town Juniors set up, in Kilsby Lane, Rugby, and benefit from being able to use a fully railed off pitch, with floodlights and hard standing along two sides of the pitch. They are having a really successful season with three trophies already won, and two more in the pipeline, including the league championship itself. In contrast, visitors Dunlop are currently bottom of the league and looking like slipping out of the top division altogether.

Kick off last night was supposed to be 6.15pm, but with Dunlop not arriving until 7pm it was always going to be a long old evening. Luckily there is a tea bar in the superb club house which kept us waiting fans well fed and watered throughout. With several of Rugby Town's junior sides training on adjacent pitches, the crowd at the start of the match reached 25 by my headcount. As training ended though, and parents collected their kids and went home, the crowd shrank to just 13 by the start of the second half.

On the pitch, the expected easy AEI victory just didn't happen. The visitors more than held their own and just after the break had a very good chance to actually take the lead, but their man blazed over the bar.

Eventually though the very loud AEI Manager, who kept bellowing that their performance just wasn't good enough, was able to relax a bit as AEI scored what turned out to be the winner.

AEI are a very friendly and welcoming club, who told me they have no interest in being promoted to the Midland league as they think the standard of football in Midland league division three is far inferior to what they already have. If you add to that the extra travelling and expense of Midland league membership, I must admit they have a point.

04/20