

TT No.43: Brian Buck - Tuesday 10th October 2017; **Little Oakley v Cornard United**; Thurlow Nunn League Division 1; Result: 1-1; Attendance: 173.

Tonight, I accompanied my friend who was making his first visit to this ground. I'd already been here a few years ago when it was in its 'raw' state. Since then it's been enclosed so it's fit for Step 6 football and they've done it surprisingly well and without destroying the beauty of the area. Three sides of the ground were already impregnable, as far as I know and the fourth side of the ground was mainly fenced off by a small 3G pitch. Tonight, they only had one bit of standing cover, behind the clubhouse goal and that was filled up by some good-natured football chanting from some senior adults, unable to quite shake off their teenage years. We arrived early enough for a pre-match slurp and we walked the 15 minutes or so it took to get to the pub. Here we encounter three men who soon realised that we were Groundhoppers and they asked us if we were going to the game. When we confirmed this, they told us that they were going as well and they offered to show us a shortcut. We accepted. Our walk initially followed the road we had just walked down. But suddenly they turned off and very soon we found ourselves in a middle of a dark field. Visions of us being beaten up and robbed by people who were in effect strangers to us entered my mind, but fortunately they were the genuine article and we arrived at the ground safely.

The game wasn't great, especially in the first half, but it picked up after the break. As the players returned to the pitch for the second half one aging home fan told his sides manager that he and his mates had their boots in their cars if he needed them. But they were not needed as Oakley took the lead with 85 seconds of the restart with a weak shot which went in off the post. But on 49 minutes Cornard levelled the scores. Thereafter both sides had spells of dominance, but mainly Oakley. The tackles started to fly in. So, did the feigning injury. One home player went down and must have been convincing because he was subbed. Much to his annoyance as when he got up he ready to continue. Towards the end a Cornard player picked up a second yellow card, but Oakley were unable to capitalise on this.