

TT No.73: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 23rd December 2017; **Heyford Athletic** v Launton Sports; Oxfordshire Senior League Premier Division; Result: 1-0; Attendance: 25 approx.

Sometimes people ask me how I can watch games like these when in the next breath I'm at a nearly full Wembley Stadium watching Spurs play. Given that Spurs are blowing hot and cold this season, there is otherwise no comparison and today's trip out was one of the best I've had all season, if not the best. First thing to do was to confirm that the match was on, as I'd struggled to do this on the previous night. But just as I was texting the home secretary, after I failed to speak to her direct, she phoned me back to tell me that it was all systems go. So off we went, leaving ourselves sufficient time to spend a lovely hour in historic Buckingham on the way. I didn't even have to pay to park as a lady gave me her partly used car park tick, thus saving me 50p!

Then it was off to the ground and as we entered the village of Lower Heyford I think that it is fair to say that we were both gob-smacked. Suddenly and although we were just about only 60 miles from home, we were transported into another world. As we descended down the narrow main street into the village-centre there were next to no pavements, each house was individually crafted and there was hardly anyone around. It was a bit misty though and I wouldn't mind betting that this is the kind of place where they would once film TV programmes like *The Avengers*. We then passed the ground on our right and seeing that they were getting everything ready, we drove on, initially to look at the church (closed), but just as importantly, to get something to eat and drink in the pub. In between the two we noticed a lady, who must have been in her seventies, high up on a step ladder, pruning her roses.

Anyway, we arrived back at the ground and they kicked off while we were still finding somewhere to park. There are two Heyford Athletic's, the other one playing in the Northants Combination at Nether Heyford, near Bugbrooke St Michaels. Bearing in mind just how cramped the housing is in this village and how hilly it is, it was rather surprising that they could fit in a football pitch here at all. But they manage it and it slopes up and down and side to side. Overall, you are given the impression that you are much further from home than you actually are. The match itself was keenly and for the most part evenly contested even though Launton Sports are bottom of this league. So, it was a bit unfortunate for them that they conceded the only goal of the game on 90(+4) minutes, from the spot after a player was bundled over, or sandwiched, in the area just as he was about to shoot. Overall a great day out and one which has a Christmassy feel to it, with mulled wine and homemade mince pies being on offer from the clubhouse at half time and probably after the match as well.

