

TT No. 123: Brian Buck - Saturday 23rd March 2019; **Newcastle Benfield** v Ryhope Colliery Welfare; EBAC Northern League Division 1; Result: 2-1; Attendance: 112.

With the weather being fine I chose today to use up some of my rail vouchers before they expire. No chance of claiming for any more today, as the trains ran pretty much to time, although coming home I only just caught my connection at Peterborough. After the train pulled in at Newcastle it was a short walk to pick up the Number 1 bus, which took me very close to the ground. I've used this bus before, last season when I travelled on a few stops to do Team Norhumbria and earlier this season when I went to the west of the City to tick off Newcastle Blue Star.

I arrived at the ground just over 90 minutes before kick-off, but the intervening time was easily filled, as the bar was open and they had some welcome hot food on the go. I washed this down with a couple of pints whilst reading the match programme. Then I was joined by the match officials and the ref's observer and I had interesting chats with them all. Then it was time for the match and I took my seat in one of the two seated stands they have on each side of the pitch to make up the 200 plus seats they have here. Also, both of these stands are flanked by some covered standing, making it into a very pleasant ground indeed. One of the covered stands had some artificial grass in it although there were some 'keep fit' machinery in here as well. In fact, everything went well, apart from one thing, namely the Benfield mascot, Benny the Bear, I think his name is. Now, bearing in mind that there were next to no children in the ground, is it not a bit stupid to go around growling at everyone throughout the whole match? Perhaps he should get out more, or at least keep quiet!

As for the match, Benfield took the lead on 9 minutes when the ball was prodded home from close range with the keeper unsighted. But Ryhope kept plugging away and by the time they equalised on 29 minutes, the goal had been coming. The ball was powered home from a corner which was not properly cleared. But within two minutes Benfield were back in the lead by way of a header from a corner and that's the way things stayed. Ryhope did try hard for a further equaliser but without success and by the end you tell that these were two midtable sides. Overall a day which went better than I expected, at a ground of which I had no prior expectation. Also, off the pitch they were well organised and efficient at everything, except the bear unnecessary of life that was!