

TT No.27: Brian Buck - Saturday 8th September 2018; **Melksham Town v Merthyr Town**; Emirates FA Cup 1st Qualifying Round; Result: 1-4; Attendance: 304.

Today I managed to get a lift to the game and as always, I was exceptionally grateful to my chauffer for the day. After having a relatively clear run we stopped off at a watering hole quite close to the ground before setting off to the match. Although they have been at their new Oakfields Stadium for a while now, you still can't see it yet on aerial views on either *Google* or *Bing Maps*, but the street signage is good and so it was easy to find. This was my third Melksham Town home match, the first being in 1986 and more recently on Saturday evening 10th April 2004 and in front of a 245 (approx.) crowd I watched them get beaten 3-0 by Paulton Rovers in a Screwfix Direct League Premier Division game at their old Conigre Ground.

The facilities at the new ground are fine, but at present it has the feel of being plonked into a field on the edge of town. In the distance you can see some new houses and I suspect that in the next few years they will quickly creep closer. The ground is also geared up for expansion should serious success come their way. I had enough time for another pre-match pint in the bar upstairs before the start, which meant that I had to walk down to my seat rather than up! From here you could see cars and people coming to the match along the dusty track, which must have been built by the same contractors who built Biggleswade Towns ground, which I understand has recently been improved. I would have thought that when any new stadium is built this should include a tarmac access way as well.

Anyway, on this cool and windy day, there was little going on in the first half. Someone had a shot on target in the first half but I can't remember from which side it came. On 30 minutes there was a handbags incident, which generated a booking for the visitors. The game desperately needed a goal and this was forthcoming on 50 minutes when the unmarked striker hooked the ball home from a cross from the right. Then the game really came to life. On 73 minutes Melksham were denied a spot kick for handball, which only I seemed to see. Then two minutes later a dreadful challenge saw a home player sent off. Then two minutes after that Merthyr doubled their lead with a spectacular shot from former St Neots player Tom Meechan. This was all too much for Melksham who quickly crumbled and conceded again on 81 minutes, although a well taken 20-yard direct free kick on 87 minutes gave them false hope, before another Merthyr goal on 90(+1) minutes finished them off. No football scores on the TV afterwards as they were showing cricket. So, we went straight home, to bring to a close, an interesting day amongst nice people.