

TT No.54: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 3rd November 2018; Rainham Working Men's Club v Inter Plaistow; Essex Alliance Division 2; Result: 9-2; Attendance: 15 approx.

For some time now, I've fancied visiting this club, partly because of the sound of the club's name, partly because there aren't that many Working Men's Clubs with a football pitch next door in the south of England, partly because it's uncommon these days, in the London area at least, for clubs this low down the pyramid to have their own facilities. Anyway, I was attracted to it and so off I went by public transport, catching a train to Rainham from Fenchurch Street. From here it is about a five-minute walk to the ground. On my arrival though, some 45 minutes before kick-off, it looked like the match might not be on. I found the pitch next to the Working Men's Club alright and spotted the permanent dugouts they have here. But the goal posts weren't up and the grass looked a tad long. But I soon confirmed that the game was going to happen and headed to the adjacent Working Men's Club. The door was locked but almost immediately someone appeared behind me, pressed some buttons and the door opened. He held it open for me and I followed him in. Next, I encountered the steward on the desk who told me that this was a private members club. I told him that I'd come to watch the football and he said that because I had a nice face, he'd let me in. So be warned. I was lucky! You might not be if you try! In some respects, I felt a bit of a fraud going into a Working Men's Club as I retired eight years ago! Anyway, after my alcoholic and dining needs were satisfied, I was ready for the game. There's not much to the ground, but it's basically enclosed with buildings on three sides and a car park and entrance on the fourth side. It's this side which has a raised step from the said car park to the pitch, giving the impression that there might have been a bit more here in days gone by. In fact, some old maps I looked at later on suggests that the pitch was partly railed off in years gone by. Only down side was that there was a lot of uncollected litter lying around from previous games. The game was not quite as one sided as the score-line suggests and despite getting thrashed the visitors had plenty of goal scoring chances during the match. But by the 25th minute they were 3-0 down. Then on 34 minutes the home lino gave an offside, which he later un-sportingly admitted to a team mate and out of the earshot of the ref, "I had to do that or he would have scored otherwise!" By halftime the hosts were winning 5-0. Things weren't quite so friendly after the break. Early on there was a disagreement between a home player and the visiting lino, which was smoothed over. Then as the goals continued to come, from both sides now, there was a big incident on 83 minutes, not seen by the ref or me. The ref didn't see much all afternoon and booked no one at all and for the most part he didn't need to. But here one player apparently punched another in the face and he was apparently elbowed in the face in return, necessitating lengthy treatment. The 'elbower' then subbed himself and went to his car, never to be seen again! But the match finished with handshakes and I then returned to the club, repeating the access situation with the Steward, where I watched the pirate (paid for) live West

Ham United v Burnley game, but the picture kept freezing. Either that or that's the way the Hammers play their football! Then it was back home with no serious transport problems to bring to a close a decent day out.

04/20