

TT No.86: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 5th January 2019; **Marsh Rovers** v Alford Town Reserves; East Lincs Combination Division 3; Result: 6-0; Attendance: 10.

My chauffer kindly dropped me off at this ground, which is in the village of Marshchapel, before he and our mutual friend headed off to Cleethorpes together, about 10 miles further north, although I'm not sure that they took the quickest route to get there! Now, I don't know what your definition of grassroots football is but for me you can't do much better than coming to a place like this. To start with, the ground is in the back garden of the White Horse pub and furthermore the club's secretary is Fiona, the landlady of the pub.

So, after a pre-match I headed off to the pitch. There was no sense of urgency to start especially after I pointed out to the ref that there were no corner flags. This was soon remedied. Then the match nearly started, but it was decided that there wasn't enough air in the balls. So, one of the away team returned to the changing rooms in a potakabin, brought back a pump, gave it to the ref and it was he who pumped up the balls. Eventually we started twelve minutes late, but no one was fussed really. Then the aforementioned Fiona appeared, with at least three bottles of *Smirnoff Ice* jangling in her coat pocket. In fact, as the game progressed, I held one of them for her as she retrieved a stray ball out of the adjacent dyke with a fishing net!

She told me that the current Marsh Rovers had only been formed two years ago after another side, Marshchapel folded. But years ago, her father played for the original Marsh Rovers. At that time, they couldn't afford any shirts, so Grimsby Town gave them a set. So, in forming this club Fiona insisted that they were called Marsh Rovers and played in Grimsby Town colours, in respect of how things were when she watched her father play. Today she was a bit worried that as the first team of Alford Town didn't have a match, they might play a few first teamers in their reserves here. But although that looked a possibility in the first half when the game was fairly even, as the game panned out after the break it soon became obvious that this wasn't the case. In fact, one of their players looked even older than me and he was one of their better ones.

Rovers took the lead by way of a direct free kick from the edge of the area with just about the last kick of the first half. Then after the break things remained much the same, with Rovers being well on top, but being unable to score. Then on 63 minutes someone called Holland doubled the lead. Two minutes later he scored again and Fiona said that she would buy him a pint if he got a hat-trick. Well he didn't get the fourth goal, but he did get the fifth and sixth ones and by now he was demanding two pints! But he was lucky to avoid the ref's eye when he got his third goal, as he dropped his shorts and if there was anything to see then he flashed it at the keeper!

After the match had finished, I then returned to the pub to kill an hour or so before my driver came to pick me up to bring to a close a really enjoyable day out here with some lovely people on a day when I didn't have to do any driving at all, which was pure heaven!

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