

TT No.68: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 16th November 2019; **Watlington Sports & Social Club** v Wells Town Reserves; Norfolk Primary Cup 3rd Round; Result: 3-4; Attendance: 20 approx.

With bad weather from earlier in the week still part of the equation in deciding where I went today, I waited until I got the nod from the Watlington chairman before I left home. Confirmation that the game was received at about 10.30am and I arrived at Cambridge North station about 25 minutes before it was due to depart. Then I hit a problem. There's no ticket office here so you have to buy your tickets from a machine, but I couldn't make it work and with a queue forming behind me I had to press the 'help button' and eventually a human being spoke to me, loudly, and guided me through the screens, in effect taking it over.

Anyway after alighting Watlington near enough on time I then walked the ten minutes or so it took to get to the ground, made slightly quicker because I had spotted a paved footpath on *Google Street View* the previous night, which brought me out right by the social club, which was already open for food and drink. Here I holed out until kick off time.

This is quite a large complex, which includes the village hall, crown green bowling and a multiuse netball/football/basketball court. Obviously, it has a football pitch as well and this could be found behind the village hall. Apart from where it backs on to this building the rest of the bumpy playing area is surrounded by trees and bushes and has a bit of an echo to it when proceedings get noisy.

The ref today, a Daniel Craig lookalike, was hot on dissent. But initially he didn't follow this up, until he was forced to when the match reached the 'business' end. The home keeper looked dodgy at the start, preferring to kick the ball away rather than pick it up and there was a cheer when he finally did so for the first time. This roughly coincided with the hosts taking the lead on 11 minutes. This was doubled on 30 minutes. But the visitors, clearly the better side at this point, despite conceding twice, pulled a goal back on 34 minutes and they equalised on 58 minutes. Then on 63 minutes, in an increasingly exciting match, Watlington regained the lead with a Bobby Smith type goal, where the Wells keeper was almost flattened as the scorer seemed to barge him out of the way as he headed home. But within a minute Wells were level and as the players of both sides were visibly tiring it was now anyone's match. But on 90(+1) minutes Wells had a player yellow carded twice within seconds of each other, both for 'verbals'. But despite this, from the free kick Wells claimed the winner. A great game which was worthy of extra time.

After the game I went back in the bar for a while and here I was made to feel most welcome by officials and players alike, although the Wells players stayed longer than those from Watlington did, for some strange reason! Then as the time passed by so the hosts reserve players arrived and at one point there must have been

about forty or so young people, in here, all behaving in a mature way. By the time I left to catch my train home, I couldn't help but think what value there was today in visiting this small club, from the North West Norfolk League Division 2, which just goes to prove that not all the best days out are in higher level football.

04/20