

TT No.86: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 4th January 2020; **Hambledon** v Lightwater United; Surrey Intermediate League (Western) Premier Division; Result: 1-4; Attendance: 25 approx.

Today, with grateful thanks to my chauffer, I got a lift. I was going to save this ground, which is not far from Godalming, for another day, as you can walk it in under half an hour from Milford station, but when we drove this way to the ground, I was pleased that I didn't walk it. But this didn't phase-out one of my Groundhopping friends, who did walk along the largely unpaved roads. We bumped into him pre-match in the nearby attractive looking *Merry Harriers* pub. We all arrived back at the ground in plenty of time for the kick off, then my chauffer departed for his game at Alfold.

Hambledon, not to be confused with either the Hambledon in Hampshire or the Hambleden in Buckinghamshire, is a very pleasant scenic ground. The club own the ground, bought for £40,000 from the adjacent landowner some years back now and they then tried to level the pitch. To a degree they succeeded, but it still slopes a bit from side to side and up and down. I watched the game on the raised banking between the two wooden dugouts. From here not only did I get a good view of proceedings on the pitch, but also of the scenery beyond.

This was a first versus fourth match and in his pre-match assessment on *Twitter* the writer reckoned that the visitors were the title favourites. By the end that statement may have been true, especially as from what I saw, the hosts aren't. Despite this it was they who took the lead on 12 minutes, by way of a header from a corner. But seven minutes later it was all square, following a spot kick, given for a 'modern' handball. By now the ref was being frequently moaned at by both sides and on 31 minutes he spoke to both captains. At half-time I told him that both sides were taking out their failings on him. He told me that this didn't worry him as he had been given the all-clear from a cancer operation six and a half years ago and to him, every day now is a bonus. However, after the break he did get his cards out, as the hosts soon capitulated and by the 58th minute they had conceded three goals in eleven minutes. Things got worse for them as on 61 minutes they had a player sin binned and two minutes later they had another player initially sin binned. But that card became red when he threw a ball at a player as he started to leave the pitch. The game, a decent one generally, then passed without further incident. Afterwards I adjourned to the bar to wait for my lift home. Here I managed to pinch a few unwanted sandwiches from the players and as the ref didn't come in for his post-match refreshments, I was given permission to eat his sandwiches as well! Overall, I shall remember the day most for the scenery and general hospitality. This was one of my better days out this season.