

12/01/06 TT No.158: *Mike Latham* - Northallerton Town (Northern League Division 2)

Wed 11 Jan 2006: Northern League Division Two, Northallerton Town 8-0 South Shields. Attendance: 60 est. Admission: £3; 28 pp programme: £0.70. FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

As the southernmost team in the Northern League, Northallerton offer travellers the opportunity to watch a different league for a change within easy reach of Leeds and the M62. With the traffic light and the weather fair the journey across the Pennines and up the A1 was straightforward after the club secretary had cheerfully confirmed there were no problems and that the game was definitely on.

The Calvert Stadium, Northallerton's home since 1976, is situated on the Romanby road about a mile or so out of town in a pleasant residential area and there is a large car park behind the nearside goal. Admission was only £3- ridiculously cheap- and a lovingly produced programme full of good reading matter and bang up-to-date was only 70 pence. Outstanding value.

The ground, formerly known as Ainderby Road, has seen Northern League action since 1982 and an interesting two-page history article in the programme charts the ups and downs of the club since then.

Most of the facilities are along the nearside touchline where a small seated stand, a covered terrace and the club house are located. There is also a quite superb tea room offering a wide range of freshly cooked specialties at next to nothing prices. Tea and coffee are cheerfully dispensed in pot mugs, the bacon butties are heartily recommended and the menu also includes fish and chips. Fantastic.

With a warm welcome also inside the well-appointed club house here is a friendly club that makes strangers feel at ease straight away.

Behind both goals are shallow terraces with some white painted stanchions to lean on and on the far side, behind the dug-outs is flat standing. The pitch was flat, well grassed and in excellent condition and the floodlights were very good.

With the kick-off at 7.30pm instead of the norm of 7.45pm there was the chance of getting home well before midnight on the deserted motorways and the trip was very enjoyable.

Having lost 8-1 at home to Consett the previous Friday it was evident South Shields were in some difficulties. That became evident when their team was announced on the 'tannoy' with many names not listed in the original squad. The visitors began the game with only ten men, before number eight arrived five minutes before half-time to ironic chants of "We can see you sneaking on" from a few of the home supporters. With the visiting manager apparently playing left-back and no subs South Shields faced an evening of damage limitation and Northallerton, four up at

half-time, could easily have reached double figures after a totally one-sided contest that was nevertheless played in good spirit. The home striker, Carl Chillingsworth, helped himself to five goals.

To complete an evening high on value for money the purchase of the superb Northern League monthly magazine, edited by Mike Amos, for only 30pence provided further reading matter and showed why it is rated by those in the know as “the best value in football.”

Eight goals, a fine programme, a bacon butty of the highest quality, a pint of John Smiths in the clubhouse, coffee from a mug, a friendly welcome and still with change from a tenner, deserted motorways and a pleasant dry evening made for a memorable first visit to this part of North Yorkshire and further underlined the magic of football at this level. Highly recommended.

04/20