

**16/01/06 TT No.161: *Mike Latham* - Motherwell (Scottish Premier League)**

Sun 15 Jan 2006: SPL. Motherwell 0-1 Rangers. Attendance: 10,589. Admission: £24; 48pp programme: £2. FGIF Match Rating: 4\*

Motherwell's Fir Park ground is well situated for the town centre and within easy reach of the railway station and J6 of the M74 motorway. With it being a Sunday there was plenty of free parking available in the town centre car parks or on neighbouring streets. Though there was a large police presence the atmosphere both outside and inside the ground was pretty friendly and the home fans in the main stand certainly made a couple of travellers extremely welcome, engaging in football chat in the minutes leading up to the first whistle.

Extensively modernised in the 1990s Fir Park is a well-designed compact stadium with excellent sightlines. The main stand, elevated above the pitch, gives a superb close-up view of the action. Home fans were also housed in the Davie Cooper stand to the left and the shallower east stand opposite with 5,000 Rangers fans accommodated in the impressive two-tiered south stand to the right.

The programme, containing 48 pages and dominated by the amber and claret colours of the home strip, had some interesting articles- one on old 'Well favourite Willie Pettigrew, another on 'Well on the internet and some good statistics though the piece on the visitors was lacking in detail. Seven games at Fir Park this season have attracted gates of less than 5,000 despite the excellent football on show on a tight budget from Terry Butcher's team and even for a game against one of the Old Firm the stadium had 3,000 empty seats.

Motherwell were unlucky to lose to a single goal, clinically despatched by the in-form Peter Lovenkrands ten minutes after half-time. The action was fast and furious and the game was played at a breakneck pace throughout with both teams always trying to play constructively. It provided far better entertainment than most of the English Premier League games that the writer has seen this season and the cost of a main stand ticket was good value for the fayre on offer.

Motherwell have a good club shop with a wide range of souvenirs and this was a most enjoyable and stress-free afternoon out. But if you want a coffee or snack inside the stadium get there early. By half an hour before the start the queue was enormous for a tiny kiosk manned by just two over-worked members of staff.