

17/08/05 TT No.21: Stephen Harris - Glossop North End (NWCL) & Whitstable Town (Kent League)

Early season enthusiasm has taken me to two new grounds in the past few days and both have proved to be very enjoyable experiences:

Saturday 13 August 2005; **Glossop North End 2-4 Salford City**; North West Counties League; Attendance: 109, programme issued, admission £4.

A rare trip up north saw me with a wide choice of fixtures for a first ever venture into the North West Counties League. Glossop proved a good choice of venue, providing everything one would hope from this league, i.e. an interesting ground, a scenic location, hot pies (though regrettably no peas or gravy) and a friendly welcome. Worried about the weather and with not much of a fall-back plan, I got there early and was one of the first in the ground.

Although pretty rough, the pitch was not too wet, so it was game on. My early arrival resulted in me being asked to run a few errands? Could I fetch some change from the bar for the turnstile man? Could I deliver programmes to the ladies in the pie hut, etc. I felt that I was in serious danger of being invited onto the committee before the game was out.

In my imagination I had seen myself in the club shop before the game, selecting my purchases from a pile of pre-First World War Glossop vs O's programmes. Alas it was not to be, they have no club shop. Indeed, there is little evidence of the club's history and Surrey Street is not the same ground that saw league football; Glossop having moved here in the 1950s. The ground is quaint and does not give the impression that its facilities have been selected from a catalogue. Everything that will take a paintbrush is bright blue. One end and one side have rather rustic covered standing areas. The other side has a small but eccentric stand. The far end features a large, but apparently redundant portacabin.

The players were enthusiastic, as one would expect on day one. Salford were marginally better and deserved their win, although they had to be strong to achieve it in a hard-fought match. A bulky match programme was produced for £1, although this was heavy on adverts. Match Rating 3*

Tuesday 16 August 2005; **Whitstable Town 2-3 Deal Town**; Kent League; Attendance: 173, programme issued, admission £6.

Last night I allowed myself to be talked into making the long and tedious train journey down to Whitstable for an evening kick-off, resulting in a very late night. I'm glad I did as this was a cracker. This league is split down the middle, with the east of the county being home to traditional clubs in established grounds, whilst the west of the county has some smaller clubs with poorer facilities and little support in the London suburbs. Whitstable definitely fall into the former category.

The Belmont ground is one of considerable character. The main feature is the stand which fills the middle third of one side. An old structure of white, wooden bench seating and red roof supports, it features the words 'Whitstable Town FC' in large white letters painted on the roof and is very photogenic. One end has a covered terrace of 4 or 5 concrete steps, whilst the other side features a clubhouse and a dressing room/dug-out complex which resembles a semi-detached bungalow. The remainder of the ground is undeveloped.

Both teams had groups of vocal supporters and a crowd of a little over 250 were taking it all quite seriously. Oddly, the official attendance was given as just 173. Whitstable had lost 6-2 on Saturday at an apparently very impressive Beckenham Town and conceded in the first few seconds of this game, prompting us to think we might witness something of a thrashing. But the rest of the game was quite evenly matched and of a good standard, with Deal winning through an excellent last-minute goal.

The match programme cost £1 and came with an attractive cover but rather disappointing content. Match rating 3*.

WebEd - in response to Stephen's excellent report *FGIF* received a message from Tony Rouse: 'Hi Martin great site you have, nice of you to write up Whitstable Town, can I ask that we post your report on our message board, with a link to your main site as well as the report. ...the reason the attendance was swelled to nearer 250 than the 170-odd officially was the complementary tickets on both sides, at least 20 bodies not counted and the reserves and U18's all came back to the ground after training, this slightly distorted the figure'. Best regards, Tony.

03/20