

09/10/05 TT No.62: Mike Latham - Arnold Town and Shirebrook Town (both NCELP)

Sat 8 Oct 2005; NCEL Premier Division; **Shirebrook Town 3-2 Mickleover Sports** (att-150).

There are many surprises on the groundhopping trail and a visit to Shirebrook Town's Langwith Road ground certainly provided one.

After enterprisingly switching to a noon kick-off for their NCEL encounter with Mickleover, Shirebrook were rewarded with the patronage of at least thirty travellers eager to fit in a double header and the welcome at the turnstiles was a warm one.

Unfortunately, one traveller appeared to have bought a 'job lot' of programmes, depriving anyone arriving just before kick-off of a purchase, which he allegedly later sold for a premium- such people are the bane of traveller's lives and beneath contempt.

Enough of the downsides. The writer had been led to believe, albeit from southern based softies, that this Derbyshire based ground deep in former coal-mining territory was one to be taken with a large pinch of salt. But nothing could have been further from the truth. Easily found through the small town of Shirebrook, about 15 mins drive from J29 of the M1, the Langwith Road ground affords excellent parking on a grassed area on the approach to the ground and the cheery greeting at the entrance set up a most enjoyable visit.

An unstapled 44-page programme packed with statistics, reports and information on both clubs was excellent value for £1 and the £4 entrance fee was money well spent as the two sides put on an entertaining game.

After falling behind to a first-minute goal, Shirebrook scored twice in quick succession to lead 2-1 after eight minutes' play. The visitors levelled after 67 minutes but a defensive blunder led to Shirebrook sub Eyre scoring the winner eight minutes from time though the visitors hit the post in injury time.

Shirebrook are clearly an ambitious club and aspire to Unibond League status in the future. Their ground has plenty of room for future improvements but already boasts some good facilities.

After going through the turnstiles there is a small covered standing area and tea hut purveying a wide range of products down one side and two small seated stands on the opposite side. Both ends are grassed banking behind hard standing perimeters with a neat white fence enclosing the playing area and distinctive white-painted perimeter fence. The dressing rooms are located at the corner of the entrance and there is also a small committee room building.

With excellent vantage points and a warm and cheery welcome a visit to this friendly club comes highly recommended. Match rating: 4*.

Sat 8 Oct 2005; NCEL Premier Division; **Arnold Town** 2-2 Long Eaton United.

King George V Playing Field, home of Arnold Town FC since 1962 is located opposite the market in the Nottingham suburb just off the main shopping drag. With the football club in their final season at this council owned venue they also share with the cricket club, a visit there was a must, and was easily made down 3 motorway junctions from Shirebrook despite the incessant rain. Around twenty travellers had also fitted in a double header with Shirebrook.

Upon paying the £5 entry, swapping banter with the cheery gateman and securing another superbly informative and fact-filled programme for only £1 (containing 56 pages) there was chance to go in the small club house, also housing a small tea bar before the game.

As with most clubs that share with cricket clubs the facilities were rather rudimentary with a small covered standing area on the far side and a covered end at the market side of the ground with bench seating. The other two sides of the ground are hard standing behind a post and rail fence.

In contrast to the Shirebrook game this was a scrappy and ill-tempered affair partly caused by the referee's inability to stamp down on some foul tackling early in the game but due largely to the poor attitude of many of the players who constantly questioned his authority.

After falling behind to an early goal, the home side looked set for a win to continue their pursuit of Liversedge at the top after scoring following an indirect free-kick inside the penalty area and a late penalty. Despite being down to ten men after the sending-off of one of their defenders, the visitors salvaged a draw in virtually their only attack of note of the second half with a glancing header from one of their substitutes. But this was not a game that reflected the NCEL in the best light, the constant fouling stopping the game getting any flow or momentum and the continual bad language and poor behaviour of some of the players ruining the game for the uncommitted neutral. Match rating: 1*.

03/20