

13/10/05 TT No.68: Mike Latham - Bacup Borough (NWCL1)

Thurs 13 October 2005, NWCL Division One, Bacup Borough 0-0 Atherton LR
(Attendance- 80)

First the good news - Bacup Borough have made Thursdays their regular time for midweek games, affording travellers the chance to watch North West Counties Division One football on a normally barren day.

But now the bad- Bacup still don't issue programmes for home games and the man at the gate has even stopped using the excuse of 'There's been a fire at the printers' by way of explanation.

How bad is that? Clubs way below Bacup in the football pyramid issue and it doesn't take much effort or inclination to produce a basic programme with team line-ups and a bit of news and information on the club. With fifteen years of experience of being an editor of club programmes in rugby league I know how unrewarding and time consuming it can be but surely, it's a necessary PR tool and a programme can make or break the enjoyment of a game.

So, £5 admission and no programme- always an unsatisfactory state of affairs. With no 'tannoy' system in operation gaining any information on the team line-ups proved to be a fruitless exercise and grated throughout the evening. About ten travellers were in attendance in the crowd of around 80 and they were equally frustrated. Two travellers turned away at the turnstiles on hearing there was no programme issued.

Bacup is deep in the heart of old Lancashire cotton mill territory and there are some magnificently renovated terraced stone properties in the town centre and leading up to the ground. If travelling by car Bacup is about 20 mins drive off the M66 motorway that leads off the M62 near Bury though the speed cameras through Rawtenstall can trap the unwary.

The ground is found just off the Burnley Road out of the town centre, turning up Cooper Street just before the Irwell Inn. There is plenty of street parking and the walk up Cowtoot Lane to the ground, seemingly hewn into the side of a hillside is atmospheric.

There is one main turnstile entry and the club house is located at this side of the ground where the Martin Peters Bar (named after England's 1966 World Cup star) dispenses a wide range of drinks and there are interesting photographs on the wall. The Bacup club is run seemingly virtually single handed by Brent Peters (I think no relation) who is a manager with a silver tongue. In recent years he has persuaded a number of prominent former Football League personalities to turn out for the club including ex-Manchester United players David May and Ben Thornley, the experienced former Bolton goalkeeper Dave Felgate and ex-Bury and Blackpool defender Ian Hughes.

A small refreshment bar manned by a very cheerful lady dispensed hot drinks and tasty meat and potato pies and seemed to do a roaring trade on a dry but chilly evening. The pitch slopes from side to side and also diagonally from the far top corner but was in good condition and the floodlights were excellent.

There is a small seated stand running along the side from the corner flag at the entrance and a small cover behind the far goal and on the far side with the rest of the ground hard standing. Surrounded by stone walls, with strategically placed ladders to enable volunteers to retrieve misplaced footballs, the ground has plenty of character.

Thornley and Hughes were in the Bacup ranks but despite their obvious class the home side had to settle for a draw in a keenly contested game of few chances with the skills of visiting forward Ian Knapman really catching the eye. With both sides in the bottom six of the division they seemed content with a point apiece.

The obvious misgivings of the lack of programmes aside, Cowtoot Lane is an atmospheric and interesting place to visit. However, travellers will continue to be dissuaded from venturing into the heart of deepest Lancashire until the programme problem is addressed and surely the NWCL cannot be too happy with the situation. FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

03/20