

**23/10/05 TT No.83: Mike Latham - Bromsgrove Rovers (Southern League 1W)**

Sat 22 Oct 2005, FA Cup 4QR, Bromsgrove Rovers 0-2 Morecambe (att.- 919)

With Bromsgrove Rovers having won eight of their last nine games and Morecambe dodgy on their travels despite their excellent home form this cup-tie looked one to savour despite the discrepancy in divisions since Rovers' fall from Conference grace.

An extremely good-humoured crowd of 919 gathered on a mild autumnal afternoon in anticipation- about three times Rovers' average home attendance.

Bromsgrove is a very pleasant suburb of Birmingham and home to Rovers since 1910. Located just off the Birmingham Road close to the town centre and ideally situated close to the Hop Pole, a noted CAMRA pub, it is an easy drive from J4 of the M5 motorway.

Initial impressions of a new ground are often the lasting ones and these were very good. Admission was £7 at the turnstiles manned by pleasant club officials and a fine 40-page programme was only £1.50. The club's social club was open to all and, despite being crowded was full of happy and excited supporters of both clubs. The refreshment bar sold good quality goods at reasonable prices and the club shop had an excellent array of merchandise and programmes and a distinctive Bromsgrove mug in green and red stripes proved irresistible.

The neat well-maintained ground is dominated by the main stand on the west side with its distinctive 'Bromsgrove Rovers' legend on the roof support. With a terrace in front it provides a very good vantage point for Rovers' most dedicated fans.

The south terrace is open standing but again gives good viewing angles. The north terrace is roofed and was where the two sets of most vociferous supporters gathered without any hint of trouble. The east side is dominated by the social club and tea bar though there is a small covered standing area.

Conference club Morecambe scored early after a long free-kick was converted by striker O'Connor and clinched their passage into the first-round draw with a second goal on the hour-mark that effectively decided the issue. Their travelling fans were noisy and good humoured with the trademark chant of: 'No Surrender to the Low-Fat Spread.'

The game was refereed by a female, Ms AE Raynor of Loughborough, who was quite outstanding, taking control with a quiet authority and deservedly booking a Morecambe player for an outrageous dive. Despite the prize at stake- a coveted place in the FA Cup first round draw- the game was played in a terrific spirit and this was due in large part to the approach of the officials.

Bromsgrove are currently in mid-table in the Southern League West Division but despite their demise from challenging at the top of the Conference over a decade

ago are a friendly and clearly still ambitious club and a visit there is heartily recommended. Match rating: 3\*.

04/20