

TT No. 100: Mike Latham - Sat 23 Dec 2006: West Lancashire League Premier Division. **Euxton Villa** 3-2 Turton; Admission: Free (raffle taken); No programme: FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

With a commitment to attend the Wigan Athletic-Chelsea game at 5-15pm the search was on for a local game with an early kick-off and the Euxton Villa-Turton West Lancashire League encounter fell perfectly.

Euxton (pronounced Ex-ton) is an expanding residential area situated between Chorley and Leyland just off the M6 motorway. Its ordnance factory, at its height, once employed 40,000 people and was, as legend has it, the place where the bombs for the Dambusters' Raid were made. Now the sports facilities have been taken over by Bolton Wanderers as a training base and much of the old ROF (Royal Ordnance Factory) site has been taken over by the building of the new Buckshaw Village.

The near-by Runshaw College is a renowned local seat of learning, while the privately run Euxton Hall Hospital has often been used by top football clubs for urgent operations on its players.

Located about ten minutes' drive from the Chorley exit of the M61 motorway, down by the hospital, over the A49 and then right into Runshaw Hall Lane the home of Euxton Villa FC is easy to find. The club's history dates back to the 1907/08 season and after early years in the West Lancashire League the bulk of the club's history has been spent in the Preston & District League.

The current site was acquired in 1986 after a nomadic existence around the region while the present title was assumed after a link-up with Euxton Villa Juniors in 1988. Nowadays the club, which has achieved the coveted FA Charter Standards rating, has 18 teams competing at all age groups from under-7s upwards in the distinctive orange and black strips.

On a still but chilly winter's afternoon, the main tree-lined pitch at the Jim Fowler Memorial Ground was heavy but perfectly playable- a huge relief after recent postponements in this league following a mild autumn. There is a large car park and a new club-house, situated behind the nearside goal, should be completed in the next two months.

Though there is no cover the playing area is enclosed by a neat post and rail fence with the tree-lined ground giving a rural feel. Though the club sometimes issue there was no programme issued for this game but the canteen, situated in the rapidly developing club house, did sell a range of souvenirs, including badges and woolly hats.

No admission was charged though a very pleasant lady went around the ground collecting pound coins on a scratch cards while club officials, recognising a stranger in their midst, were very friendly and welcoming.

A very competitive game between two mid-table sides was interesting viewing the home side just about deserving to hold sway. Euxton Villa also host an excellent website and a visit to this friendly and progressive club comes highly recommended.

06/20