

**TT No.135: Andrew Gallon** - Wed 31st January 2007; **Barton Town Old Boys v Dunkirk**; CML Challenge Cup Rd 1 replay; Res: 8-2; Att: 50 (h/c); Admission: £3; Programme: 50p (40pp); FGIF Match Rating: \*\*\*\*\*.

A personal landmark made it a night to remember. My previous highest aggregate score in a senior game was nine - on three separate occasions - but this entertaining goal-fest eclipsed it thrillingly thanks to two strikes in the last five minutes. Strangely, that outcome never looked likely at the start of the second half. Barton, thankful to escape the waterlogging problems which have bedevilled their recently-opened Euronics Stadium, were 3-1 up and looking a little hesitant. Not surprising, really. Barton led 3-0 in the recent league game at Dunkirk and the Boatmen came back to win 4-3. But a fourth soothed nerves and sparked an astonishing goal rush as an increasingly frustrated Dunkirk had Greg Whatnall sent off for a reckless challenge, his second bookable offence. The Swans were so much on top in the last half-hour, they really should have reached double figures.

Barton's new ground is on the site of the rather ramshackle old one - but the similarities end there. Once all the work has been completed, the club will have a home of which they can be proud and, more importantly, enable the reigning Central Midlands League Supreme Division champions to climb the pyramid after falling foul of non-league football's grading curse last season. The previous pitch was at right angles to the new. To orientate those who visited before the changes, the near-end goal used to be in front of the gardens of the houses on the left as you turn in off the narrow, traffic-choked Marsh Lane. The basic site has not altered. Immediately to the south is the pitch of the town's cricket club, with Butts Drain enclosing it to the north and east. The single-track Barton branch railway line runs beyond the northern perimeter fence, with Marsh Lane to the west. Over to the north-west, a quarter-of-a-mile distant, are the twin towers of the magnificent Humber Bridge. The dowdy old clubhouse and dressing rooms remain on the right and will be used until their state-of-the-art replacements are ready.

At present, the ground is enclosed with a high wooden fence and consists merely of open hard-standing. A breeze block wall is neatly topped with tooled wood and the floodlights, four masts on each side, are excellent. Hardcore has been laid for stands on the east side and south end, with the clubhouse, featuring a function room and gymnasium, to be located in the bottom left-hand corner. The foundations are already in place. A new road is to be built, providing access from the east and entering the ground in the north-east corner. The land now occupied by the car park and clubhouse will become houses, with the sale raising a rumoured £250,000 for the club and underwriting the revamp. Exciting times for the Swans who have made giant strides (or should that be waddles?) on the pitch in recent seasons and, if they can cope with a terrible fixture backlog, could be playing Northern Counties (East) League football this time next year.

Here's how the scoring went:

11min: Gareth Barlow's through ball sends Steve Carter away. Nets coolly in a one-on-one (1-0);

27min: John Parkinson breaks down the left, crosses low and Craig Burdick side-foots home (2-0);

37min: Parkinson turns to shoot low from 12 yards (3-0);

39min: Scott Pratt hits a 20-yard curler into the top corner. A stunning strike (3-1);

52min: Burdick crashes in an angled drive from outside the box. The goal of the game (4-1);

55min: Slack marking at a corner allows Barlow a simple near-post header (5-1);

60min: One-on-one for Lee Geraghty after a Barlow through ball (6-1);

61min: Burdick strokes in a consummate penalty for his hat-trick (7-1);

85min: Joel Wilson tucks away a well-struck spot-kick (7-2);

88min: Barlow finishes neatly in another one-on-one (8-2).

If you visit Barton, get there early because it's an interesting little town with plenty to see, including two outstanding medieval churches and the awe-inspiring suspension bridge. A bridge too far for most opposition this season, I'd suggest.

06/20