

**TT No.178: Mike Latham** - Sat 17 March 2007: West Midlands Regional Football League Premier Division; **Bewdley Town** 2-2 Tividale; Attendance: 70 (headcount); Admission: £3; 40pp programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 5\*.

“A good choice” was the ringing endorsement of a fellow traveller when I revealed my plans for the weekend included a trip to Ribbersford Meadows.

As the name implies it is an idyllic venue, one of the most scenic on the circuit, located on the banks of the fast-flowing River Severn just a mile or so outside the impressive Worcestershire town of Bewdley, the former seat of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, and just three miles from Kidderminster.

After a spell ground-sharing at nearby Stourport, Bewdley Town are back on their own patch, having begun an impressive development of their riverside home.

A highly unusual steeply inclining wooden stand has been constructed on one side of the ground, hewn into the wooded hillside and a distinctive wooden changing room block, also incorporating a tea bar with home-made cakes, has also been added. The rest of the ground is open standing behind a post-and-rail fence with an impressive amount of advertising boards.

The ground has suffered from flooding throughout the winter and this was only the second home league game since November. Despite a good forecast a precautionary telephone check call was deemed necessary. “The ground’s fine, it’s been spiked and rolled and it’s a nice day down here,” responded the secretary at 11am. “Go through the town and turn left by the church and keep on following the road after the houses run out and you’ll come to the ground.” A fine service indeed.

Sure enough, the directions were spot-on though severe traffic delays in Kidderminster, one of the most congested towns in the country in my experience, afforded no opportunities to explore the four GBG-listed pubs in the town. The turn-off to Ribblesford is easily missed, but once found leads out of town, by the side of the river and to a turning with a bright sign welcoming the visitor to the home of Bewdley Town FC.

There is a club house by the entrance and a car-park with further parking available by the path that leads towards the ground a few hundred yards or so along the river bank. The location really is idyllic, especially on a mild early spring afternoon with bright sunshine.

The view from the stand, with its steep, elevated position, is excellent apart from the problems created by one of the six floodlight pylons being positioned halfway along. This stand provides the only cover if the weather turns out badly.

On several occasions the ball is hoofed into the river on the far side, being returned by club officials with long poles or passing river-craft.

Second placed Tividale fall behind to a goal on the stroke of half-time that looks decidedly offside but spring to life with two goals in quick succession, one a penalty and the other a sublime finish from their number eleven. But the visitors then contrive to miss a re-taken penalty, both efforts being saved by the home goalkeeper and the inevitable happens when the home side level with the last kick of an excellent game- a screaming 20-yard volley. "A fitting end to a fantastic game of football," is the view of the reporter on the local radio station and it's hard to disagree.

Clearly a club with developing roots in the community and building a good junior set-up Bewdley Town's ground is still at the formative stage. There are no announcements, the team news is hard to find and despite selling raffle tickets the winning numbers are not clearly informed. Minor niggles apart, the wonderful location makes this one to savour though the programme, a 40-page effort with a bright yellow cover, contains not a single page with the line-ups- unique in my experience- and two pages of bawdy jokes that would be better located in a university rag mag- and that is not meant as a compliment. These quibbles apart a visit to Ribblesford Meadows ground of Bewdley Town comes highly recommended.

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