

TT No.21: *Dean McClean* - Sun 3 September 2006. FAC Prelim. Round; **Biddulph Victoria** v Boldmere St. Michael's. Res 2-2; Att: 90ish; Admission: £5; 48pp Programme; £1 FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

Persistent heavy rain in deepest Lancashire through-out Saturday, and during Sunday morning prompted a rather cautionary phone call to the Biddulph secretary to confirm the go-ahead of the match. Thankfully reports of drier weather in Staffordshire came as quite a relief. To think we are having to worry about the weather affecting matches on the first Saturday in September seems like madness.

After a pleasant journey through rural Cheshire via the A34 we arrived at Tunstall Road with around 45 minutes to spare. The ground is located on the south side of the town and is easily visible to the left when travelling South. Driving through the sleepy streets of the former mining community it was safe to say that "FA Cup fever" had failed to reach the town as yet.

Due to the Vic's having to share their ground with Knypersley CC this match was switched to Sunday allowing myself and around 10 fellow travellers the opportunity to "tick" off another ground. Though Knypersley CC has never staged County Championship matches, it has had the honour of staging a few Derbyshire one day matches as well as Minor Counties' fixtures as the home ground of Derbyshire 2nds and Staffordshire. Having to share one side of their ground with the adjoining cricket club has obviously limited the Vic's in respect of their ground facilities and one wonders if their choice to ply their trade in the Midland Alliance, rather than the NWCL, is more down to lower ground grading standards in the MA than playing in a more geographically friendly league.

A warm welcome and an excellent programme filled with fact, stats and historical information on both teams was there for many a traveller. Upon entering the ground, the main building incorporating the changing facilities and excellent tea-bar are situated behind the goal. The meat and potato pie comes highly recommended. Tunstall Road is basically a three-sided venue. The covered accommodation lies behind the goal nearest to the entrance. Hard standing is to be found down three sides of the ground. Running down the far touchline is a rather annoying, if necessary, high netting which reminded me of games watched on the continent.

A fast, furious game with more endeavour than skill ensued as the home side raced in to an early 2-0 lead. After only troubling the score sheet on a mere one occasion in their previous six matches it was somewhat a surprise to see them score twice early on. After a half-time rollocking, from their furious manager the "Mikes" came out in the second half with more purpose and deservedly earned a replay with two rather scrappy goals.

Another one off the list!

