

TT No.54: Mike Latham - Tues 24 Oct 2006: Liverpool Sen Cup 2nd Rd: **Bootle** 2-2 Prescot Cables (aet; Prescot w 3-0 pens) Attendance: 110; Admission: £3; 44pp programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

New Bucks Park is the new home of Bootle, who have re-joined the North West Counties League this season.

Situated about half-a-mile from the world-famous Aintree Racecourse the ground is easily reached from the M58 and M57 motorways travelling down the A59 towards Liverpool city centre and then following the excellent directions on the NWCL website.

With plenty of car parking inside and outside the ground, it is one of the easiest to visit and a cheery gateman will admit you for a modest £3 while a decent programme, incorporating the league's newsletter, is good value for a further pound. There is a good article on club stalwart Frank Doran, the president, who recently completed 50 years' service.

A page in the programme explains the crest of the county borough of Bootle, incorporating a lighthouse to indicate the borough's position at the mouth of the River Mersey.

The ground is still being developed but there is plenty of space for stands, dressing rooms and a club house to be built. At the moment the teams change in temporary buildings and a van in the far corner provides the only refreshments. There is a small identikit seated stand and a small covered standing area.

The rest of the ground is open standing behind a neat post and rail fence with the dug-outs situated on the far side opposite the entrance.

The playing area, slightly sloping from side to side, is in pristine condition and looks a fabulous surface on which to play football. The floodlights, three towers on each side, are reasonable.

A decent crowd assembled on a chilly but dry evening and they saw Bootle give a good account against opponents three levels higher in the pyramid. The home side's impressively nippy central striker bagged two goals and hardly deserved to finish on the losing side as a competitive cup-tie played at a fast pace went to extra time and then the dreaded penalties.

With Bootle being a former-Football League club, many travellers will make a visit here a must this season even my friend Rupert who normally restricts himself, rather sniffily, to levels 5 and above.

Having completed the clean sweep of levels 1-4 with a visit to Abingdon on Saturday, where he was disappointed not to be greeted with a silver salver presentation as a mark of his wonderful achievement, Rupert is now attacking

level 5 with the same gusto with which he oversees his busy legal practice in the city.

But even Rupert is planning a trip to New Bucks Park this season. He will not be disappointed for although this is a new ground with a lot of work still to do to ensure its completion there is an unmistakeable sense of progress and optimism in the air as Bootle aim to climb the football pyramid.

On Rupert's itinerary is a trip to the nearby cricket club whose Hawthorn Road ground hosted Bootle's Football League matches all those years ago. Those football pioneers of long ago would be proud of the current club's attempts to keep the soccer flag flying in the area.

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