

**TT No.63: *Mike Latham*** - Wed 8 Nov 2006: Sheffield & Hallamshire Sen Cup 2nd Rd: **Penistone Church** 2-1 Nostell MW Attendance: 60 (Estimated); Admission: £3; 8pp programme: 50pence. FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

Having been to a couple of cup finals at Hillsborough in this competition, held towards the end of the season in usually warm weather, a midweek trip to the Memorial Ground in Penistone on a cold and dark evening was the reminder that much of this competition is played in conditions far less favourable.

Penistone Church FC competes in the Sheffield and Hallamshire County League and I had been recommended a visit by some travelling acquaintances. But when my friend Rupert phoned in from his lofty perch at Harlow Town's new ground, he treated me with some disdain when I told him of my destination for the evening.

Rupert is a Level 5 and above man and rarely dips his toe in lower than that in the pyramid. He still has nightmares about his temporary sojourn into the Central Midlands League on last Easter's hop with the final game, a 0-0 draw at Bolsover, a particularly gruesome memory. But sometimes, though not often, Rupert can be wrong and the 50-miles or so journey to Penistone via Huddersfield and the A629 road towards Sheffield was relatively straightforward and the visit was a reasonably rewarding one.

Penistone is a small market town perched high on the West Pennine hills between Huddersfield and Sheffield. The views on a clear winter's day from the Memorial Ground, situated just off the main street, I am told are spectacular. There is plenty of car parking and the ground is clearly a focus of the local community, with a floodlit all-weather football pitch in use and several adjoining grass pitches, all immaculately kept.

There is a small and compact club house incorporating a bar and a small refreshment room that did a roaring trade on a cold evening. One traveller, who has a habit of missing kick-offs and goals, gave the beef-burger-and-chips a respectable mark. A programme was produced but, with only eight pages, two given over to the respective squad lists, a small welcome page and a brief history of the visitors, it was a pretty poor effort with no list of the home side's results or fixtures for the season. There was no tannoy, or a blackboard listing the line-ups rendering the un-numbered squad lists pretty meaningless.

With about half-an-hour to kick-off the floodlights came into action and the ground came to life. There is a small cover running half the length of the pitch from the clubhouse end situated behind the goal towards the halfway line with the letters: 'PCFC' painted on the supporting wall. The dug-outs are on this side with the rest of the ground flat standing behind a neat post and rail fence. All but a couple of hardy souls standing on the far side made use of the covered three-stepped terrace. It would be quite easy to imagine this set-up, with some hard standing and seated accommodation introduced, being capable of meeting the requirements for

the Northern Counties League for the playing pitch, flat and well grassed, was very impressive, especially for this time of year.

The visitors, Nostell MW, have made a good start to their first season in the NCEL but on this occasion they finished second best to a dogged home side. Both the home goals came from corners, the winner arriving ten minutes or so from the end and saving the dozen or so travellers present from the prospect of extra-time.

Penistone Church FC are celebrating their centenary in 2006 and a gathering of present and past players at the club on 24 November will conclude a series of social events to mark the notable landmark. This win took them one step closer to Hillsborough and a fitting end to their landmark season.

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