

TT No.75: Mike Latham - Sat 25 Nov 2006: West Lancashire League Premier Division. **Charnock Richard** 4-2 Dalton United. Attendance: 80 (headcount); admission: free (second half raffle); 36pp programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

With fixtures falling left, right and centre to the curse of water-logging after monsoon style weather overnight in Lancashire it was with some relief that a cheery voice on the other end of the telephone confirmed this West Lancashire League game would definitely be taking place with a 2pm kick-off.

Charnock Richard is a small and pleasant residential village a few miles from Chorley and close to the M6 motorway best known for the Park Hall hotel and conference centre and Camelot theme park.

Its football club are consistently one of the best performers in the highly competitive West Lancashire League despite not paying a penny to players and the club also run several other senior sides in local leagues as well as a thriving junior set-up.

The Mossie Close ground is situated on Charter Lane, just off Church Lane in centre of the village. The first team pitch has been switched this season, necessitating a re-visit from groundhoppers who have previously visited this friendly club. The "old" pitch, neatly railed-off and with a smart club-house behind the nearside goal and dressing room complex down one side is now used by the reserve team and a game in the Preston & District League was taking place at the same time

The first team now play on the opposite side of the road on a site that is undergoing development. The playing pitch is flat and well grassed and had taken the deluge of water remarkably well. The pitch is surrounded by a temporary roped surround and dug-outs have been erected down one side adjoining a small golf course. The other side is part shared with the village cricket field. Behind the far goal is a farmer's field and the nearside goal also has a reasonably sized car park. The club hope to erect a covered stand and seated area and floodlights in due course.

A magnificent 36-page programme with a full colour cover and containing some excellent colour photographs inside provided a highlight. Charnock Richard are one of the few clubs in this league to issue and it is a splendid effort, full of statistics, tables, match reports, secretary and manager's columns, history pieces and comment. It would put to shame the programmes of many clubs far higher up the pyramid.

Though no admittance is charged the chairman goes around with a raffle after half-time to help raise much needed funds. The welcoming and well-appointed club house is open for refreshments throughout the afternoon.

A bitterly cold wind helped reduce the crowd numbers from the usual 100-odd but the stalwarts that braved the elements and lined the ropes were rewarded with a

competitive and interesting game played in a generally good spirit that was deservedly won by the home side. Half-a-dozen Arsenal fans, on their way to the nearby Reebok Stadium for a 5-15pm kick-off ticked off the ground having made an early morning departure from London and they certainly seemed to enjoy their visit.

Devotees of this league assure me the standard is comparable to all but the top teams in the North West Counties League (levels 5 and 6) and this seemed a fair assessment based on the evidence of a fast-flowing game. With no cover you need a good umbrella on a wet afternoon but a visit to this friendly and progressive club in a quiet part of Lancashire, with splendid distant views of Winter Hill, comes highly recommended.

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