

**TT No.85: *Dean McClean*** - Wednesday 6th December 2006. North West Counties League Div. 1: **Colne FC** v Salford City. Res: 2-2; Att: 102; Admission: £5; No programme; FGIF Match Rating: 4\*.

Given the monsoon type weather here in Lancashire over the past week, I was as stunned as anybody to hear the Colne secretary utter those magic words us groundhoppers hold so dear... "game definitely on". Remarkable to say the least.

So, feeling in good spirits I headed along the rain drenched M65 to Holt House Stadium, home of Colne FC. I was still not 100% that the game would be on but on reaching the top of the hill on which the ground is perched, I saw the satisfying site of players warming up on an outside pitch.

Formed as recently as 1996 out of the ashes of the famous Colne Dynamo's FC, who folded 6 years previously. Colne have made good progress in recent years, establishing themselves as one of the strongest teams in the NWCL 1st Division, which is surely one of the toughest in the country at step 5 level.

In 2004 the club made it to the semi-finals of the FA Vase, where they were beaten by a strong AFC Sudbury team 4-3 on aggregate in front of a huge crowd at Holt House. It was a remarkable run that included a memorable win away to fans' club AFC Wimbledon in front of over 3000 fans. A year later the club once again made good progress in the national knock-out competition, but went down 3-2 at home to eventual winners, Didcot Town in Round Five.

In the 1980's Colne Dynamos were one of the leading lights of non-league football. Funded and managed by their very own millionaire, Graham White. Between 1987 and 1990 the club enjoyed un-equalled success, when it won the NWCL Division One; Northern Premier League Division One; Northern Premier League and were winners of the FA Vase in 1988, beating Emley in the Final at Wembley Stadium. The club also reached the FA Trophy Semi-Final in 1990. An incredible run that saw victories against the likes of Accrington Stanley, Altrincham, Farnborough and Kidderminster, before eventually losing to Barrow over two legs. The club and town would surely love to see League Football in the coming seasons. But upon winning the NPL in 1989 (the season which saw Dynamos turn full-time) with a huge total of 102 points, the club were denied promotion to the Football Conference because of their Holt House ground not meeting Conference regulations. After this Graham White pulled the plug and the club were confined to annals of football history.

A visit to Holt House comes highly recommended. It is an atmospheric ground, full of charm and has cover on all four sides. Perched high on the hills over-looking Colne and East Lancashire, the views are often spectacular from the ground. The tea-bar also comes highly recommended, it's so good in fact that my fellow traveller broke his strict diet, to indulge in one of the many fine pies on offer.

On a wet, cold and blustery evening the present Colne side were entertaining high flyers Salford City. This promised to be an exciting, open game between two good footballing sides and it certainly lived up to all expectations, as a lively encounter played at brake neck speed ensued. After racing into an early 2-0 lead, Salford were quickly pegged back to 2-1. Colne eventually grabbed the equaliser they deserved in the second half. Either side of this Salford hit the woodwork on no less than four occasions! An excellent advert for the NWCL all round.

The only minus point to evening was the lack of a programme, which is quite unusual at Colne. I will give them the benefit of the doubt though as, like us, they probably thought the game had no chance of going ahead given the appalling recent weather.

06/20