

TT No.101: Stephen Harris - Saturday 27 October 2007; NCEL; **Parkgate 6-0** Brodsworth Welfare. Att: 46; Admission £5; Programme issued; FGIF Match rating: 4*.

With Leyton Orient's big, and ultimately very disappointing, game at Doncaster Rovers switched to the Sunday, I decided on a weekend visit to South Yorkshire and found myself in digs in a cheap, but surprisingly posh hotel in Rotherham. Sightseeing opportunities in Rotherham proved rather limited and the town centre pubs were awash with the green colours of Northampton RUFC, in town for a Welsh Sports fixture. Being a Londoner, I rarely encounter followers of the Union code and I admit they made me feel rather uneasy. So, it was a relief to get the bus up the hill to the Roundwood ground of Parkgate FC.

Amongst my circle of friends, the Northern Counties East League is known as the 'Pie & Peas League' and my early arrival was designed to allow plenty of time to indulge in this northern delicacy, having survived the day so far on a diet of beer and chocolate. Unfortunately, the tea bar's shutters remained firmly down until 30 seconds before kick-off, eventually rising to reveal that they dealt only in hot drinks, crisps and yet more chocolate. I felt they were letting down their league, although this being Yorkshire, they did at least pour a decent cuppa.

I think the ground is unchanged since Richard Panter's description (see *TT 136*) of last season. On three sides the ground is enclosed by a concrete panelling wall with hard standing behind. The east side runs hard against an evergreen hedge separating the football pitch from the adjoining cricket pitch on this large former-British Steel sports ground. The north end has an endearing pair of covered enclosures separated by the tea hut. One contains white-painted, wooden bench seats, the other is the smallest covered terrace I have ever seen for which it has been felt necessary to install crush barriers. The west side has a couple of concrete steps backed by a sloping grass bank, providing the best vantage point, including a marvellous view of the active steel mill in the valley below.

We endured a rather pedestrian first half, edged by Parkgate who led 1-0 by the interval. In a dull moment, I counted 82 spectators present, compared with the highest declared league attendance so far of 41. Had I stumbled by chance on a game sufficiently attractive to double the home crowd? No, the official attendance was given as 46 - it seems that Parkgate, like many other clubs, sell themselves short by only announcing the number of paying spectators present rather than the full size of the gathering. The second half was much more enjoyable with all-out attack by the home side. They quickly went 2-0 up and then Brodsworth had a player sent off and another booked for calling the referee an "idiot". Away heads dropped and the goals flowed. I counted 6, although the chap next to me swore the total was 7, my version of events being confirmed at the end by a linesman.

An adequate, colour-copy, match programme was issued for £1.20. All together an enjoyable visit and a place I would go to again if I was in the area.

06/20