

**TT No.112: Ian Hill** - Sat November 10th 2007; **Prestwich Heys** v AFC Blackley; Manchester FL Premier Division and **Bury** v Workington; FA Cup 1st Round proper.

Match 1 - Saturday November 10th 2007; **Prestwich Heys** v AFC Blackley; Manchester FL Premier Division; Res: 2-0; Att: 35 (h/c); Admission: £2; Programme: Free (12pp); FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

My main game of the day was the FA Cup 1st round fixture of Bury v Workington (see Match 2 below). The chance of visiting a new ground was not to be missed as I checked the MFL fixtures for an early kick off. With Prestwich Heys being three miles from Bury's Gigg Lane I decided to watch the first half of their game against AFC Blackley.

Thanks to the very good Prestwich Heys website and AA route finder I was able to find the ground but it's not an easy one. Set on the edge of a residential area there is a large car park which can easily accommodate all the cars and more at the game. The entrance is through a gap in the perimeter fence where you are charged £2 and given a free programme. The programme was very good. 12 pages with a full colour cover and plenty of information inside.

The ground is very basic. It is enclosed by a large panel fence on all four sides. The pitch is railed off and there is hard standing around the pitch. The changing rooms look like they have been built out a converted ship's container. The clubhouse next door is a portable building that doesn't look much from the outside but inside it is well looked after with lots of memorabilia on display, one large screen TV and two smaller ones. Sky Sports is showing as the pre-match entertainment. There is a small bar serving food and drink. Hot pies are on sale and come served on a proper plate. Everyone is helpful and friendly.

The only spectator cover at the ground is a metal frame at the front of the clubhouse which has a tarpaulin draped over it. A set of floodlight pylons are stacked against the perimeter fence and a turnstile which is ready for installation stands forlornly near the dressing rooms. It looks like Prestwich have plans to develop the ground but something must be holding up the plans.

Prestwich are the current MFL Premier League champions and they play an attractive passing game of football. The first half was quite entertaining but the most interesting aspect of the game was the AFC Blackley goalkeeper. Dressed in an orange shirt the rather portly chap looked like a giant orange!!

Prestwich Heys are a well-run club and hopefully, if their ground improvement plans go ahead, will move up to the North West Counties League.

Match 2 - Saturday November 10th 2007; **Bury** v Workington; FAC 1st Round; Res: 4-1; Att: 2641; Admission: £14; Programme: £2.50 (68pp); FGIF Match Rating: 4\*.

Ex-Football League club, Workington, were making their first appearance in the 1st round of the FA Cup for 25 years. Cheered on by a travelling support of 650 they gave a very good account of themselves, but as ever football can be a cruel game, as they found out.

Since my last visit to Gigg Lane a few years ago the ground has become all seated. Four neat stands decked out in blue seats are on offer with the Workington supporters housed behind one of the goals. Opposite on top of the stand is a very poor scoreboard that is in need of repair. There is genuine excitement amongst the Workington supporters whereas the Bury fans appear to have a couldn't care less attitude. It was a very strange atmosphere in a sparsely populated ground.

The game started badly for Workington with their fullback stretchered off after a crunching tackle by the Bury fullback. The Referee and his assistant felt that a free kick was sufficient punishment. If it had been a Workington player making the tackle then you just knew a minimum of a yellow card would have been the punishment.

Bury controlled the first third of the game and opened the scoring through their fullback after 20 minutes. Workington's nerves finally settled and they came back into the game for the last 15 minutes of the half.

The second half was much better with both sides going on the attack and Workington dominating the second half. With 12 minutes to go they equalised with a quality finish by Matt Berkeley. The game looked like it was heading for a replay when a howler by the Workington keeper allowed the Bury Centre forward Andy Bishop to score the first goal in a 10-minute hat-trick that sealed the tie for Bury. It was tough luck on Workington and the final score was not a reflection of the game.

Bury issued a 68-page colour programme which sold for £2.50 for the game. But like the day it was quite a dreary one for Bury.

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