

TT No.132: Mike Latham - Saturday 1 December 2007: Sports Italia West Midlands League Premier Division. **Bridgnorth Town 2-0 Brierley Hill & Withymoor**. Att: 100 (h/c); Admission: £3; Prog: 24pp, £1; FGIF Match Rating: 2*.

The West Midlands League has provided me with some entertaining matches and atmospheric grounds to visit in the last couple of years and I had high hopes of a memorable trip to the beautiful Shropshire town of Bridgnorth on the undulating banks of the Severn.

Bridgnorth Town are leaders of the league and were up against a mid-table team in Brierley Hill & Withymoor looking to extend their lead at the top.

Firstly, there was a favour to dispense- a friend had desired going to Molineux for the Wolves-PNE Championship game, not a game that held any attraction to me, but I agreed to drop him off outside the ground en route for Bridgnorth. It's 14 miles from Molineux to Bridgnorth and soon the Crown Meadow ground was to be found, located in a residential area off Innage Lane leading out of the highest part of the town.

An early arrival meant time to explore Bridgnorth- an interesting and busy town bustling with activity. Rather like neighbouring towns Kidderminster and Stourport the narrow streets are choked with traffic and it's well worth allowing extra time for your journey. The market was in full flow and lots of shoppers seemed to be busying themselves with purchases for Christmas. It was good to see several posters around the town advertising the game and despite the cold weather around one hundred gathered to see the local team in action.

Crown Meadow is a distinctive ground with its main feature a smart, three-rowed main stand with an unusual curved roof. At the entrance side there is a shallow covered terrace, a tea bar and a club house. The rest of the ground is open standing with two sides backing onto the gardens, many immaculately kept, of residential houses. The pitch has a pronounced slope from end to end and the elevated nature of the grassed banking's means there are some excellent vantage points with several bench seats thoughtfully provided, including one behind the far goal.

Sadly, it's not a great game and has an element of niggles throughout though things do calm down a little after the visitors' no8 is sent off for two yellow cards in quick succession early in the second half. An early headed goal divides the teams until a penalty in injury time finally confirms Bridgnorth's unconvincing victory. The visitors, many of their players wearing ill-fitting bright yellow jerseys, feel aggrieved by the defeat but in truth only an excellent display from their goalkeeper prevented a heavier reverse.

Despite the poor fayre on the pitch on this occasion, the visit to Bridgnorth, a former Southern League ground, is well worth the trouble. The locals are friendly,

the tea bar is excellent and the club house has television screens and a big screen to catch up with action elsewhere. The programme is full of information and statistics and Bridgnorth, an FA Charter Standard Club with a host of junior sides under their wing, look to be a club on the up.

Back to Wolverhampton and fighting through the traffic to pick up my mate- PNE have lost 1-0 which means my postman will be in a bad mood again all next week. It takes less than one minute to hear the salient facts of what sounds like a turgid game of football. Suddenly my trip to Bridgnorth felt an even better way of spending the afternoon. Recommended.

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