

TT No.193: Mike Latham - Sun 10 February 2008: Newcastle Cup 1st Round; **Newcastle** 0-4 Bishop's Castle. No programme, admission by donation; Attendance: 40 (h/c); FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

APL's posting on the Tony Kempster website alerted the possibilities of this game, kicking-off at 2pm and affording an excellent chance of a double with Forest Green Rovers later in the day.

I consulted the Oracle who replied with the news: "It's a charity cup played by teams in the Mid Wales South and Montgomeryshire Amateur leagues (step 4, Monty Div. 2 is step 5)."

Good enough for me, and on a gloriously sunny afternoon the players could be seen warming up on the pitch as the village of Newcastle was reached via a winding road from Clun, deep in the heart of rural Shropshire.

The views are magnificent with steeply sloping wooded hills rising all around from the village. Newcastle play in the Mid Wales South League at the Mill Field ground and use the neighbouring Crown Inn for post-match hospitality.

The playing pitch, bordered on one side by housing, was well grassed and remarkably flat with access via a small gate. The players from both sides seemed to know one another and I was later informed that several members of the Newcastle team play cricket for Bishop's Castle in the summer.

The only cover on the ground is a small covered stand that might fit in perhaps a dozen spectators at a pinch. But on such a splendid afternoon as this there was no need to take any shelter from the elements.

Bishop's Castle made a great start, scoring twice inside the opening four minutes and going on to secure a convincing victory in a hard-fought game played in a good spirit and controlled expertly by an experienced referee.

This was grassroots football at its best, a lovely rustic setting on a beautiful afternoon and a real taste of rural England, just a shame that just four travellers out of a crowd of around the 40-mark were there to savour the occasion.