

**TT No.231: *Mike Latham*** - Sat 12 April 2008; West Lancashire League Division 2; **Milnthorpe Corinthians** 1-2 Furness Cavs. Att: 80 (h/c); Admission: donation; Prog: 16pp, £1; FGIF Match Rating: 4\*.

It may be the second Saturday in April but after another rainy night there is still some trepidation that the dreaded curse of waterlogged pitches will strike again.

Fortunately, Milnthorpe's pitch looks well-drained and after arriving an hour and-a-half before kick-off to the reassuring sight of a neatly rolled and prepared pitch and the red and white corner flags in place the spirits were lifted appreciably.

Milnthorpe is a small market town north of Lancaster in the old county of Westmorland and about nine miles south of Kendal on the old A6 with its roots in medieval times. Comb-making, canning, printing and coach building have provided the principal industries alongside tourism and there was once a turnpike road here.

With its distinctive limestone buildings and atmospheric market square, boasting a butcher's shop as good as I have ever seen, it's a pleasant place to while away an hour while the glorious scenery across Morecambe Bay from the nearby coastal villages of Silverdale and Arnside provides another attraction. The air is fresh and there's the pleasant aroma of newly mown grass as the cricket club groundsman goes about his business in preparation for the forthcoming season.

Milnthorpe Corinthians were formed way back in 1890 and play at the town's recreational ground that is shared with the cricket club. It's a tremendous facility in a quite stunning location. The Cors, as they are known, once played Wigan Athletic in the FA Cup (1962/63 season, away - lost 0-5) but now compete in the second division of the West Lancashire League or level nine of the non-league pyramid. After suffering a couple of relegations, they have re-grouped in some style this season and with two games to go needed a point to guarantee promotion back to the first division. Optimism is high, especially after a 7-0 victory at Furness earlier in the season but they did have a draining league cup final against Crooklands just a couple of days before, which they won 3-1.

The neighbouring cricket club, members of the Westmorland League, list their ground name as the Recreation Field, Park Road while the Cors' ground name is stated as Strands Lane. As well as the first-team, the club also runs a second and third team (the latter playing as FC Milnthorpe who I had visited a few days before, based at Holme) together with an under-18s team. They have achieved FA Charter Standard Community Club status and are clearly a well-organised and substantial concern.

The ground is dominated by a distinctive small stand bearing the legend 'Corinthians FC' painted on the roof frontage. There is also a small club house incorporating a bar and an excellent tea-bar and everyone involved with the club is friendly and seems to have a smile on their face. Unusually for this level the club

also produce a programme- a decent 16-page production with up-to-date reports, league tables and seasonal statistics. The rest of the ground is either railed or roped-off and by kick-off time a decent sized crowd has assembled.

The game was a hard-fought and well-contested affair and the visitors were clearly in a mood to avenge their big defeat of three months previously. After forcing the play, they scored the opening goal five minutes before half-time, add another seven minutes after the re-start and then hung on to record a deserved victory despite a single Cors' reply 21 minutes from time.

So, the Cors will have to rely on their final game of the season, at home to Lytham, to secure the point needed to guarantee promotion. A game well worth seeing if you get the chance to visit this friendly club situated in a delightful part of South Lakeland.

06/20