

**TT No.28: Mike Latham** - Wed 22 August 2007: West Cheshire League Division One; **New Brighton** v Ashville. Result: 4-2; Attendance: 30 (h/c); No admission charge; 24pp programme: 50 pence; FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

At last something approaching a summer's day and, eager to take advantage of the early evening kick-offs from clubs without floodlights I consulted the Fylde-based oracle for his thoughts.

After due consideration he delivered his verdict: "On a day like today go to New Brighton if you've not been. It'll be lovely on the dunes; they do a good programme and there's a small tea bar. It'll look better than going in November."

So off I went to the end of the Wirral Peninsula in search of my first dip into the West Cheshire League. Harrison Park, home of New Brighton, is actually in neighbouring Wallasey, located in the sand dunes close to the sea just after Wallasey Golf Club. There is plenty of parking on Harrison Drive or down the unmade road by the side of the railway line that leads to the railed-off pitch with dug-outs nestling in the dunes.

The location is certainly unusual and, with the sun shining from a clear blue sky, Harrison Park looked a picture. Sure enough, my consultant was spot-on- the small dressing room block incorporates a small kitchen where cups of coffee and delicious pasties were cheerfully dispensed and a warm welcome greeted the traveller. And a tall, studiously distinguished looking gentleman identified as 'Long Tom' dispensed an informative 24-page programme, packed with reports, history and information, for only 50 pence.

With no stands or cover this would indeed be a difficult ground to visit in the depths of winter if it was raining hard. Despite a blustery wind blowing in from the sea viewing was pleasant and an interesting, though not particularly high quality, game got underway seven minutes after the scheduled 6-30pm kick-off time, ending in the gathering gloom.

Once a thriving seaside resort with a famous tower, destroyed during the First World War, New Brighton housed two separate Football League teams- the original New Brighton Tower who folded in 1901 and New Brighton AFC, who played in the league from 1923 until 1951, eventually folding in 1981. The venues at the Tower Grounds and Rakes Lane (from which their current nickname of the Rakers derives) are long gone but anyone owning a copy of Garth Dykes's superb club history, published by Breedon Books in 1990, can re-live the days when New Brighton were an established Football League side.

The present club was founded in 1993 and, after working up from the local leagues, joined the West Cheshire League in 1996, earning promotion to division one a couple of years ago. Surprisingly, no admission was taken, not even an

attempt at a raffle to help defray some expenses for this local derby game against neighbours Ashville.

With the benefit of the strong wind New Brighton established a 3-0 interval lead but the roles were reversed at the start of the second half and the visitors pulled back two goals in double-quick time. But then the wind suddenly abated and the home side re-established control, scoring an excellent clinching goal from a free-kick and won comfortably in the end.

A visit to New Brighton comes highly recommended, especially at this time of year. It's an unusual though pleasing venue and club officials are friendly and the excellent programme and mouth-watering pasties add to the enjoyment. My ground-hopping oracle rarely lets me down and he again came up trumps today.

06/20