

TT No.72: Mike Latham - Sat 29 September 2007: Northern Counties East League Div. 1; **Barton Town Old Boys** 4-2 Leeds Met Carnegie. Att: 80 (h/c); Admission: £4; Prog: (non-delivery); Rating: 4*.

It's 2-30pm on a sunny Saturday afternoon and the club official manning the turnstile at the Marsh Lane ground of Barton Town Old Boys is pacing up and down like an expectant father.

The programmes haven't arrived and the spectators approaching the ground are getting edgy.

In the end the programmes don't arrive at all and many a person's afternoon-or at least the handful of travellers present as part of a double header incorporating the Hull-Wigan Super League play-off game at the KC Stadium (k-o 7pm) are left disappointed. Two depart in a huff at 2-45pm, hoping instead to catch the kick-off at North Ferriby United. They refuse to countenance watching a game without programmes- it's high time they chilled out, in my opinion.

The perils of being a club official are never better illustrated- through no fault of his own the poor chap has to now mount a charm offensive.

He does a good job- the welcome is genuinely warm and there is no shortage of friendly locals eager to welcome a stranger and run through the developments at this club in recent years.

Formed as an amalgamation between Barton Town FC and Barton Old Boys FC in 1995, the merged entity played in the Lincolnshire and Humber Premier Leagues before joining the Central Midlands League in 2001, progressing up to the NCEL in 2007.

As a consequence, ground developments have been huge, not least the momentous decision taken earlier this year to turn around the playing area and floodlights by 90 degrees and develop new access, car-parking, changing rooms, club-house and stands.

The result, partly funded by the sale of some land for building, is very impressive. The Marsh Lane ground, re-named the Euronics Ground via a local sponsorship deal, is approached via the cricket club and close to the town centre of Barton-upon-Humber, located on the south bank of the Humber and the first (or last, depending on which way you are travelling) turning off the A15 after or before the Humber Bridge crossing (£2.70 per trip for cars) is a hugely impressive ground, ideal for this level.

The perimeter wall is solid and sympathetic to the surroundings, the exterior fence reassuringly solid and the main stand, opposite the club house, looks a picture in the late summer sunshine. Two smaller stands behind the far goal add to the facilities and the club-house is bright, airy and with excellent facilities, not least a

tea bar with hot drinks and pie and peas and a flat-screen television with Sky Sports News.

A club official comes up with programmes from the last game- a fine effort, 40 pages full of information, statistics and background- such a shame this afternoon's effort will never see the light of day.

Leeds Met Carnegie are newcomers also to the NCEL this year and despite a gruesome kit design with a colour combination of green and purple have added a lot already, not least with their athleticism and ability to play football.

On a superb playing surface, the home side, starting the game second in the table, eventually prevail 4-2 but only after a hard fight after a skilful game easy on the eye. The game is marred by an accidental early collision between two home players and one is later carried off the pitch into an ambulance- let's hope his back injury isn't serious. It's nearly 5pm by the time the referee calls time but the afternoon has produced some fine entertainment and the excellent facilities add to the enjoyment.

Barton-upon-Humber is a pleasant town to while away an hour before kick-off with an excellent GBG listed pub and a fine bakery on the main street. The inventor of Pitman shorthand and the illustrator of Desperate Dan cartoons were both born here- ideal qualifications, one may think for producing a match programme. The lack of one is the only downer on an enjoyable afternoon and, within 20 minutes of the final whistle, two travellers were lobbing up outside the KC Stadium where the main drama of the day was just about to start.

The estimable Leon Gladwell visited this ground in 2005 and one of his photographs is in the club index of this website. But such have been the changes here it is now very much out of date. Other travellers and Leon will have to re-visit here since the pitch re-location. They won't be disappointed.

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