

TT No. 134: Ian Hill - Sat 24th November 2008; Mini Scottish Hop - **Petershill** vs. Turriff Utd; SJC 3 and **St Mirren** vs. Dundee United; Scottish Premier League.

A - Sat 24th November 2008; Scottish Junior Cup 3rd Round; **Petershill** vs. Turriff Utd; Res: 2-0; Att: 280 (h/c); Entry: £5; Prog: 20 pages-£1.

Many years ago, I popped into St Mirren's, Love Street, or as it is officially known St Mirren Stadium for a look round. This was out of season and I always planned to return to watch a game. With time running out for the old ground I decided to get a visit in before the move to new "stadium in a box" facility down the road took place.

Checking the Scottish Junior Cup fixtures, I noticed that Petershill had an early kick off so I thought I would pop in watch a bit of their game against Turriff Utd and then make my way to Paisley. I would have liked to visit the old Petershill ground in all its glory but all that remains is some of the outer wall, a set of steps into the ground and an entry gate. I was quite impressed with the new ground though. Although it's a council sports centre facility at least it is a bit different than the new "bog standard" grounds being built in England. The Scottish Juniors are not strangled by ground grading as their English counterparts are.

I made my way into the reception area with the main focus being a reception desk for the fitness studio on site. To my right was a well populated bar with two large plasma screens showing the live *Sentanta* game. If you go down a corridor to the side of the bar you are met with a large function room that was also well populated with drinkers. I decided that a "half" wouldn't go a miss. It was quite funny that the bar maid struggled to find me a half pint glass. Obviously, I looked very macho as a young couple behind me ordered 2 pints of larger, two whisky chasers and a 1/4 bottle of vodka to share. This was followed by a guy drinking treble whiskey's and coke!

Entry to the ground is through a door past the reception desk. Admission is £5.00 with a nice programme sold inside for £1.00. The ground is dominated by a grandstand that runs along two thirds of the pitch. It is built into the side of the sports centre. Behind one of the goals is some form of red gravel hard standing. The other end of the ground has no access as there is an office block building near the touchline which forms the outer boundary. Opposite to the stand is three steps of terracing. The pitch is 3G and it was the first time I had watched a competitive game on this type of surface. The pitch did seem a bit fast but the major difference to grass is that there were no sliding tackles in the game.

The ground is a bit atmospheric. It is very much in "Taggart" land. Tenements back onto the terracing and some ugly looking tower blocks are in the distance behind one of the goals. If someone had said "There's been a murrerder", it wouldn't have been surprising.

I was quite enjoying the game and lost track of time. Panic set in as I realised that I was going to miss the start of the main game at St Mirren.

B - Sat 24th November 2008; Scottish Premier League; **St Mirren vs. Dundee United**; Res: 0-2; Att: 4,013; Entry: £-? Prog: 52 pages-£2.50.

After losing track of time at Petershill I jogged down to the station to get a train back to Glasgow Central and catch a train to Paisley. I had passed through Paisley station a numerous, occasions where the Love Street floodlights are clearly in view. Love Street is one of those grounds that, if you are not a local, they are not easy to find. I eventually made it to the ground with 30 minutes of the game gone. I found a wonderful head steward who decided to let me in for free (lesson to all English Football Club's - get your stewards trained in Scotland - they actually treat you as a human). One of the things I love about Scottish football is that politically incorrect one liner's, are still allowed. There were some real comedians in the crowd and it was good to chuckle along to the football. This being a typically Scottish game, it was played at 100mph with the bone crunching tackles going in.

Dundee took the lead through Jon Daly on 37 minutes to give the men in tangerine a half time lead. Daly added a second after the break but this game was dominated by some woeful finishing from St Mirren's Wyness and Dorman. They certainly dismissed the theory that "it was easier to score" as they could have played all night and still missed the target.

Love Street was certainly in the process of being wound down and was looking shabby. It does have great character though and it is a real shame that this ground will be lost to some unimpressive modern architecture. At the end of game, I went to the main reception to see if I could pick up a programme. Another helpful steward was obliging. As I didn't have the right change, he let me have the programme for £1.00. Hats off to St Mirren, a very friendly club and an enjoyable visit. It's just a pity I missed the first 30 minutes.

06/20