

**TT No.217: Mike Latham** - Mon 27 April 2009: Furness Premier League Premier Division; **Bootle** 3-2 Haverigg United; No admission or programme; Attendance: 52 (h/c); FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

Many of the more ambitious clubs in the Furness area have left the Furness Premier League behind and moved into the West Lancashire League or, in the case of Holker Old Boys, the North West Counties League.

Bootle FC went the other way- after more than a decade in the West Lancashire League they returned to local league football and, happily, this warm and friendly, community-based club continues to thrive.

This game was something of a rarity in the league that is dominated by the reserve teams of clubs like Vickerstown, Askam and Millom- a derby match between two first teams. Haverigg United I had seen earlier in the season and they made the short journey up the A 595 to play their final league game of the season on a beautiful sunny and warm evening.

Bootle is a small coastal village between Barrow and Workington with a population of less than 800. It is a well-established settlement as a charter for a market here was granted by Edward III back in 1347.

The football ground is easy to locate, just to the right of the main road before entering Bootle from the south. The ground is named Millholme and is shared with the Bootle & District Bowling Club whose, immaculately kept green and pavilion, reflect local pride.

The football ground is in a stunning setting, partly surrounded by mature trees with rolling fields full of livestock and steep hills that tower above the village. The scenery must have changed little since Edward III's day.

The match is well attended with the villagers out in force- a headcount midway through the first half came to 52 which is a better attendance than many games at level six I have attended this season.

The game kicked-off at 6-30pm and was over soon after 8pm after a minimum break for half-time. The standard of play was quite good, both mid table sides trying to play constructive football in a good spirit.

Haverigg scored two early goals, both the result of defensive mistakes but Bootle fought back well to equalise before the interval. The winning goal came 15 minutes before the end and, on the balance of play was well deserved.

Bootle FC's ground is well-kept and impressive for this level of football. Neatly railed off down two sides, there is a smart pavilion behind the nearside goal with viewing balcony from where refreshments were served.

The ground would easily accommodate West Lancashire League football should the club ever desire to move back- for the moment, though, they seem happy to play at this level in a league that is well administered (with an informative Mitoo website). This was an enjoyable evening spent in a beautiful location and a visit here comes highly recommended.

One of the most beautiful beaches in the country at Silecroft is a few minutes' drive away and afforded some magnificent views of the sunset over the distant Isle of Man across the Irish Sea. The magnificent Prince of Wales pub in Foxfield is another attraction if heading back towards the motorway north of Lancaster, but sadly is closed on Mondays.

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