

TT No.48: *Mike Latham* - Sat 27 September 2008; Cheshire League Division 1; **Knutsford FC v Middlewich Town**; Result: 1-2; Admission: £1; Programme: No; Att: 20.

It's a beautiful sunny afternoon and I am planning a trip to Scotland to watch St Cuthbert Wanderers v Wick Academy in the cup - just as I am about to set off there is a panic 'phone call from my daughter.

She's competing in a horse eventing class at Kelsall in Cheshire and has forgotten a vital piece of equipment. Can dad come to the rescue? There's no decision to be made, so instead of heading north on the M6 I'm going south, then along the A556 when the panic of my own sets in. I've forgotten my Traveller - where do I find a match?

Luckily, a groundhopping colleague has a mobile signal on his trip to mid Wales and some invaluable advice on the whys and wherefores of the Cheshire League is readily available. The programme has been amended due to cup results and it's ascertained that Knutsford are at home to Middlewich- a tasty game in a nice setting.

So instead of rolling up at Kirkcudbright here I am at 2-45pm going up the Warrington road (A50) out of the leafy Cheshire League town of Knutsford-half-a-mile out of town and the home of Knutsford FC can be located on the right-hand side.

It's an idyllic setting just as my friend advised. Enclosed by a neat, railed fence and with a small covered area straddling the nearside touchline it has the look and feel of a proper football ground. The far side is bordered by mature trees that act as a windshield- behind them a rugby union match is taking place on some immaculately kept playing fields.

By the entrance is a striking, white-painted and well-kept club house that includes the dressing rooms and a tea bar, named the Robins Nest that is open for business and doing a brisk trade in hot drinks and pie and peas while a television set blares out the latest sports results.

The Cheshire League has grown on me during the last year or so - the league website is immaculately kept and the standard of football is generally reliable, played in a good spirit in nice surroundings.

This first division clash confirms that view. Middlewich, befitting one of the league's most consistent teams look well organised and full of purpose, taking an early lead and threatening several more goals.

But Knutsford gradually regroup and are well worth their equaliser on 70 minutes until Middlewich get a second wind and their centre half steals up-field to score what proves to be the winner three minutes from the end.

Seven minutes are added on by the excellent young referee after an injury to a home defender. Obviously in pain after sustaining a knee injury, he's treated behind the home goal for the rest of the game- let's hope he makes a rapid recovery.

Knutsford's ground, known as Manchester Road, is an idyllic, stress-free place to watch a decent standard of football in nice, rural surroundings. Just a shame that the club don't produce a programme that would make them more appealing to groundhoppers.

06/20