

TT No.95: *Mike Latham* - Sat 22 Nov 2008: Aspire Midland Alliance: **Coleshill Town** 1-1 Bridgnorth Town; Attendance: 52; Admission: £5 (including 24-page programme); FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

Every so often the search for the next football ground to tick off one's list of 'must-do's' reveals an absolute jewel- that is the way I felt upon driving through the gates of Coleshill Town's Pack Meadow ground and first impressions proved to be wholly accurate ones.

Coleshill Town moved up to level five of the non-league pyramid after 30 years in the Midland Combination following last season's championship-winning campaign. Like many promoted teams they have found it hard to adjust to the higher demands and manager Carl Adams stepped down on the Monday before this game, citing work commitments were preventing him giving the job the time it deserved.

Adams had been Coleshill's most successful manager of recent times and despite lying in 17th position the recent signs, as one Coleshill supporter explained to me, were encouraging that the players were beginning to adapt to the Midland Alliance.

Coleshill is a smart market town in North Warwickshire with a surprisingly rural feel despite being cheek by jowl with the vast urban sprawl of Birmingham. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, it has a population of just over 6,000 and is ideally situated close to J4 of the M6 motorway and with the M42 nearby. There is a new railway station, Coleshill Parkway, to add to the town's appeal though for groundhoppers the walk from there to the football ground, located out of town down Packington Lane would be something of a challenge.

By the entrance to Packington Lane, opposite some half-timbered buildings is an impressive A-board sign advertising the game and a further signpost directs the motorist through the gates into the football ground where club officials collect the £5 entrance fee with a cheery disposition and dispense a complimentary, if rather rudimentary 24-page programme.

There is plenty of car-parking inside, indeed one could easily watch the game from the warmth of one's car, a tempting prospect on such a cold, raw afternoon. The playing area is enclosed by a smart railed fence and, to comply with the league's requirements, a new 70-seater stand has been constructed on the nearside, in a tasteful green design and bearing the legend that Coleshill Town FC were founded back in 1894.

On the far side of the ground is a much older covered seated stand, with a couple of rows of bench seating. Like everything else in the ground, it is immaculately maintained and provides welcome shelter from the prevailing winds.

A screen of mature conifers provides a wind break behind one goal and another football pitch stretches back beyond the old stand while an impressively plush club

house, also encompassing the dressing rooms and tea bar is situated at one corner of the ground. On such a cold day it was a good place to choose to while away the minutes up until kick-off where a warm welcome awaited. To add to the general feeling of contentment the two team line-ups had been copied out and displayed on an A-board by the entrance to the club house- a wonderfully simple service that is often overlooked by so many clubs and must save club secretaries hours of time over a season.

The Midland Alliance, I must confess, isn't my favourite step five league often appearing to lack the intensity and tempo of a North West or East Counties League game. This encounter between two promoted sides confirms that impression. Coleshill make the best of the chances but fall behind to a sucker-punch goal on the stroke of half-time. After conceding a penalty home 'keeper Butler makes a superb save to deny Horler only for Sangha to score from the ensuing corner-kick.

But Coleshill battle on and deserve their equaliser by Robinson with twenty minutes remaining and only a couple of fine saves by Bridgnorth 'keeper Taylor deny the home side victory.

It would be hard to find a more pleasant ground to watch a game of football than this one, especially as the most obvious needs of even the more demanding groundhoppers are met as standard. It's just a shame that Coleshill, like so many community clubs, fail to get the support they deserve- the official attendance for this game is just 52 and that includes at least 20 who have made the journey over to support the visitors.

The club house tea bar serves hot drinks, pies and hot dogs at most reasonable prices and everyone associated with the club is friendly and approachable. If you haven't been to Coleshill, I would add it to your list and aim to visit this civilised part of the footballing world at your earliest opportunity.

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