

**TT No. 107: Mike Latham** - Sun 29th November 2009 - FA Sunday Cup Second Round: **Brow** 3-3 Mirehouse, aet; Mirehouse won 5-4 on kicks taken from the penalty mark (at **Heswall FC**); Att: 30 (h/c); Admission: £2 including 8pp programme.

It's a dismal Sunday morning, it's cold and wet and park pitches are so saturated many Sunday footballers are having a day off. With precious few choices for the groundhopper it looks like a blank day.

Then, inspiration arrives with the morning papers. I had stored up somewhere deep in the memory cells that this second round tie in the FA Sunday Cup was still unresolved. After two blank Sundays, ties in this competition are usually reversed but after the first game was called off due to water-logging the reason for last Sunday's postponement was a different one. After the horrendous floods in West Cumbria Mirehouse from Whitehaven, were advised not to travel.

So, third time lucky it was, a check 'phone call to the Heswall FC club house very worthwhile. 'We're anticipating no problems and the visitors have set off,' a friendly voice informed. So off to the Wirral it was, arriving in good time for the 1pm kick-off. Easily reached just four miles from J4 of the M53 Heswall is one of the most desirable places to live in this leafy part of Cheshire suburbia.

Heswall FC's ground is called Gayton Park, home to the West Cheshire League outfit since 1971. It's a well-appointed venue with a superb club house and a neat post and railed fence around a well prepared, flat and well-grassed pitch. Thankfully, there's a small covered standing area along one side, which proved to very welcome on an afternoon that tested the commitment. No wonder many spectators decided to stay in the warmth of the clubhouse, where a good view of the action could be had. As I arrived there was the reassuring sight of the visitors' coach in the car-park, the players were warming up and everything was set fair.

What fabulous entertainment this tie provided on the most-dire day weather wise. The game started in relatively dry and bright weather at 1pm but after several twists and turns ended in heavy rain on a dank, cold and dark evening at 3.40pm.

Birkenhead based Sunday League side Brow FC had reached agreement to stage their ties at Heswall. But they had a problem with only eleven players available- the Everton-Liverpool derby being blamed for shortages in numbers. Mirehouse, who run several sides including a senior Saturday side in the Cumberland County League, had set off at first sparrow's cough and now will have to do the same again next Sunday when they play Salisbury in the third round at Bootle FC- though that will prove to be something of a relief to their officials. On first hearing the draw they quite understandably thought they'd be journeying to Wiltshire.

The game was terrific, full of good football, well officiated and played in a good spirit on a pitch that stood up well to the rain. Brow started the stronger as the

visitors, after their long journey struggled to shake weariness from their limbs. It was no great surprise when the home side took the lead on 21 minutes, but Mirehouse equalised six minutes later and extra time looked nailed on from that point.

Brow lost a player injured after 80 minutes but strangely played better with ten men, scoring twice in the first period of extra time. But a rocket free-kick gave Mirehouse hope and after hitting the woodwork they were awarded a penalty in the second minute of added on time to equalise, going on to win the tie, on kicks taken from the penalty mark.

Heswall FC play in the West Cheshire League and their ground is a picture, very well maintained and enclosed by mature trees. Hot drinks and food were available throughout what proved to be a long but worthwhile afternoon in this excellent competition.

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