

TT No. 114: *Chris Freer* - Saturday December 5th 2009; **Clyde** v Arbroath; Scottish League Division Two; Score: 1-0; Attendance: 552; Entertainment value: 1/5 (can I give it a half?).

At the rag end of the 80s, I was at a trade show at the SEC in Glasgow. Looking for some evening entertainment I noted that Clyde FC were at home on that very night. Now I had no idea where Clyde actually played, but I reasoned with a name like that it had to be somewhere in Glasgow. My travelling companion of the time persuaded me that the evening would be much better spent down the nearest pub drinking beer and eyeing up the local women. A man of little apparent substance, I was won over to his argument and the chance to discover and visit Shawfield was lost, subsequently as it turned out, for ever.

The club's move to its new home must have been like a dagger to the heart of Glaswegian fans of Clyde, seeing as Broadwood is in a different conurbation entirely. I'm not sure what crowds used to frequent Shawfield but I'm hazarding a guess it must have been a few more than those dragging themselves from Cumbernauld and its satellites down to the new ground.

As I said in a previous post - and disputed by a resposdee - my rail journey into Glasgow offers me a 'tantalsing glimpse' of Shawfield, with the much larger mass of Celtic Park in the background. I make sure that I check this out once again today, just to reassure myself that I'm not delusional. Having said that, the sight of a backpacker at Crewe station struggling with two rucksacks and an ironing board has me rubbing my eyes a tad.

I seem to arrive in Glasgow today with the place not quite ready for me. There are a few problems at the Crystal Palace, a GBG-listed Wetherspoons, although the brekkie does show a deficiency on the hash brown front. A touch of CD shopping at Fopp and I'm ready for another pint. Unfortunately the GBG-listed Ingrams Bar has no real ale on at all, the nearby Drum & Monkey is full of women that shop and there's no seats, whilst at the Pot Still the youthful barman is struggling to find a beer he can pull through, and all the stools are still up. Still, it's only 12.30 in the afternoon, eh?

I check my I-phone and the Clyde game is still on. Even at this late stage I consider whether I should switch to Stennie who are at home to non-league Cove Rangers in the cup, but faced with the mouth-watering prospect of the two bottom sides in League Two ripping the hell out of each other in a jamboree of Total football, I alight the train at Croy and make the 20-minute walk to Broadwood. From a distance the stadium looks very impressive but it's a bit like a Notts County scenario. Half an hour to kick off and you wouldn't know a match is taking place, just the dayglo presence of an odd steward or two giving the game away.

Broadwood currently consists of three stands, only one of which is used on matchdays. The ground holds over 8,000 when full, but a third-tier match against

fellow strugglers like Arbroath is never going to produce a sell-out. I scoff down a Macaroni Pie and look for a seat. No problem there, I can have a row to myself if I want. The teams emerge, with Clyde headed up by the most miserable looking mascot I think I've ever seen. It's a bloke (I presume) in some kind of spotty dog outfit, with his oversized head hanging somewhere down by his waist. Presumably in his pomp he was a tall, upright, imposing kind of figure, strutting and proud, but the ravages of time - and successive relegations - has seen him take something of a beating. A bit like his team.

As the names are read out, only the local schoolkids seem to get excited, a high-pitched 'Yaaaay' greeting every announcement. Curiously, no 'boos' for the opposition - a sporting bunch! My expectations of a blood and thrust encounter, both teams going at it from the off, are swiftly shattered. Arbroath seem to have the intention of playing a gentle passing game, but there's very little in the final third, whilst Clyde provide the serious running mentality, but sadly consistently down blind alleys.

Neither side have a striker that's worthy of the name, and it takes a freak goal direct from a long-range free kick to settle the issue. The strike comes right out of the blue, even catching out the tannoy man whose job it is to play the goal celebration music - the teams have kicked off again before the 'Woolly Bully' jingle strikes up. A local youth behind me - who looks strangely like the lead singer of Keane - is beseeching everybody to keep the volume going, but he's fighting a losing battle. There's just not a lot to get excited about.

It's easy to see why these two are the basement clubs. On the day, neither have very much to offer the beautiful game. Hard running and pretty passing might be desirable in the make-up of a successful side, but when just one of these is your only attribute, you've got a long, hard season ahead. A trip to Division Three looks nailed on for both. For long-suffering Clyde fans, this will have only one consolation, in that they will once again get to see some football back in Glasgow. Sadly, it will be at Hampden, courtesy of Queen's Park. Maybe it will even offer them a 'tantalising glimpse' of those Shawfield floodlights....

There's more on my blog at <http://flynn123.wordpress.com>

Footy from a real ale and veggie food angle...

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