

**TT No.23: Ian Hill** - Monday 31st August 2009; **Fleetwood Town v Workington Reds**; Blue Square North; Score: 4-0; Attendance: 1079; Admission: £10; Programme 40 pages £2.00 Match rating: 2\*.

Its seven years since I last visited Fleetwood's Highbury Stadium. In 2002 Workington were once again the visitors for a FA Cup Qualifying Round fixture which resulted in a 1-1 draw with Fleetwood having their largest crowd of the season 214. How things have changed. Both clubs now compete in the Blue Square North, Fleetwood have loads of cash and their ground has had an impressive makeover.

Fleetwood have been investing both on and off the field. Making his debut for the "Cod Army" was former Barrow player Steve McNulty. Signed for a fee of £17,000 and according to the Fleetwood supporters I was speaking to a £750 a week pay packet and a £10,000 signing on fee. As a Workington supporter I could only look on in envy and I'm sure our players were as well with that weekly wage! They also include ex Premiership player Alan Wright who played for Blackburn Rovers and Aston Villa.

Since my last visit - Highbury has three new stands. A new main seated stand sits in front of the old grandstand which has not been demolished. I believe this is because they still use the old dressing rooms in that stand. Two new large covered terraces have built behind both goals. The remaining side of the ground remains open with the former social club turned into a sponsor's lounge, some unusual terracing consisting of concrete beams and tarmac has been installed and to finish off there is an impressive electronic score board. It also looks like new floodlights are also in place.

Entrance to the ground is through a set of turnstiles in one corner of the ground. Inside this corner becomes a bit congested as there is the entrance to an extremely impressive bar under the new terraced stand, refreshment facilities and the selling of programmes and raffle tickets. The food on sale is very good and excellent value for money. A giant size portion of chips and mushy peas only £1.40! The new bar is very plush. Newly opened it is all spic and span with numerous plasma TV's showing Sky Sports. Also, inside the bar is a small club shop selling various club souvenirs.

Programmes are £2.00 and are a bit of a let-down compared to the other aspects of this progressive club.

The game was scrappy in the first half with Fleetwood taking a 1-0 lead with a Beckham-esque free kick. The second half was a none event for Workington as they were outplayed. There was one glimmer of hope as they should have been awarded a penalty but once again, in this league, a poor referee turned down their appeals (and mine!).

Fleetwood are aiming for promotion this season and it will be interesting to see how they progress. Everything seems in place for a move up and if the cash is available don't be surprised to see them in the football league in a few seasons.

06/20