

TT No.37: *Mike Latham* - Sat 26 September 2009, Scottish Cup 1st Round, **Hawick Royal Albert** 0-7 Huntly; Attendance: 200 (h/c); Admission: £5; Programme: £2.

It's Scottish Cup first round day, one of the best dates in the calendar- a chance to watch teams from different leagues compete and with the weather usually good enough to prohibit any fears about late postponements. On the face of it this tie pitted underdogs against a side with genuine hopes of a good cup run. And that's how the game panned out with an impressive Huntly side shrugging off any lethargy from their 225-mile journey to the Scottish borders to romp through to the second round.

Hawick is set in rugby country and along Mansfield Road the town's major rugby team was taking on local rivals Gala in a league match at their splendidly appointed Mansfield Park ground. But since the demise of the Border Reivers, a fully professional side based at Gala, rugby's popularity in the area appears to be on the wane somewhat, this local derby attracting a crowd of only 360 to one of the keenest rivalries in the rugby code.

In between Mansfield Park and the football club's Albert Park ground another rugby game was taking place with Hawick YM, also members of the Scottish national league set-up playing Lasswade before a crowd of around 150.

Hawick Royal Albert FC are a senior football club which now entitles them to enter the Scottish Cup every year. The club was founded in 1947 following a breakaway from Hawick Railway FC. One of the club's founders, William Brunton originated from Larkhall whose football club Larkhall Royal Albert had been founded back 1878 by a mine owner. Brunton decided to name the new Hawick club Royal Albert.

Hawick moved to Albert Park in 1963 and were subsequently inspected and became full members of the Scottish Football Association soon later. The stand at the ground was constructed from the steel remnants of a local woollen factory, which had been destroyed by fire. Hawick won the East of Scotland League three times, the last in 1974, but in recent seasons have played mainly in the second tier of the East of Scotland Football League and have frequently struggled to avoid finishing at the foot of the league. The main stand is impressive with several rows of seats and a bar and tea room located at the top of the stand. The rest of the ground is basic, with an overgrown grass banking on the far side that backs on to a steep wooded banking.

Huntly brought a coach-load of supporters who helped lend atmosphere to the occasion on a glorious sunny afternoon. A local told me that many Hawick games struggle to attract home crowds of above 20 to 30 so it was good to see the ground relatively full.

Hawick held out until midway through the first half when a home defender handled a goal-bound header on the line and was red carded. Huntly scored from the resulting penalty and added a second just before half-time. The second half was little more than a procession with Huntly adding five more goals and looking every inch an impressive Highland league side. A rudimentary programme was issued for the game with little more than some pen pictures of the visitors, photos of home players, the squad lists and an SFA press release as its contents. The visitors were referred to as 'Huntley' throughout.

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