

TT No.7: Mike Latham - Tuesday 18 August 2009: West Lancashire League Premier Division: **Lostock St Gerard's** 1-1 Blackpool Wren Rovers; Attendance: 80 (h/c); No admission or programme.

Lostock St Gerard's have clearly come a long way in a short time, through the West Lancashire League to the Premier Division this season after joining from the Preston & District League. Their ground is at Wateringpool Lane, Lostock Hall between Leyland and Preston. The playing area is immaculate and there is a dressing room block and tea bar and a neatly railed off pitch surround with lots of advertising boards.

The ground is dominated by two giant gas holders at the far end and there are open fields behind one end and houses nearby. It looks as though the space is there to build the ground up to Vodkat League requirements should the club's ambition stretch further subject to planning permission for floodlights. There is currently no covered accommodation and that would surely be next in the pipeline.

There was a team called Lostock Hall Locos that played in the West Lancashire League before the first world war but the current Lostock team's origins, as the club's website explains date back to just after the Second World War. Four acres of land had been donated to Our Lady and St. Gerard's Church as a recreation area for members of the Parish by a local land owner and after the Second World War efforts were made to form a team.

The newly formed club joined the old Preston & District Catholic league (currently known as the Churches League) and remained there for several years with varying amounts of success. Later on, a junior side was introduced and ran alongside the senior side again for several years. Both teams were managed by men from the parish.

The land was later subject to a compulsory purchase order by the local development corporation but the church entered into a lease back arrangement and paid a yearly rent for use of the land. In the mid-1980s the land was put on the open market and the football club set up an independent charitable trust and purchased the land with help and grants from various organisations. New changing accommodation was provided with again assistance from South Ribble Borough Council, the Sports Council and the Harris Trust.

The West Lancashire League is a well-run competition and has an excellent new website which is well worth a look.

This was a fluid, competitive game between two teams that had both made unbeaten starts to the season. Against the run of play LSG got the opening goal on 41 minutes but the visitors deservedly levelled on 76 and a draw was a fair result.

A visit to this friendly and progressive club comes highly recommended but with no cover choose a dry day or bring a brolly.

