

**TT No.71: *Chris Freer*** - Tues October 27th 2009; **Market Drayton Town v Mickleover Sports**; Northern Prem League Cup 2; Score: 2-3; Attendance: 69; Entertainment value: 3/5.

The prospect of a blank weekend looming up, due to domestic obligations, leads me to the potentially rash decision that I need to drive 50 miles or so on this October evening to fit in a ground I had originally planned for March. I have my son for company, with it being half term week in our area. He's been complaining of his lack of pitch-side action this season, so I can kill two birds with one stone.

Market Drayton's ground is to the north-west of this small Shropshire market town. They share the complex with the local tennis and rugby clubs, and it's the latter's car park you use. We manage to walk past the club house in the gloom and are amongst the first to enter the ground, a quick tour of which takes in the snack bar - jacket potatoes advertised - the modest main stand, with its mix of ancient and modern seating, and a wooden two-step terrace that looks like it might once have served as a stabling block in The Waltons. In fact, wood is in predominance around the ground, no doubt a nod to environmentalists due to its location out in the sticks. The lack of an obvious clubhouse leads us to ask the question, and we are redirected back out of the ground and up towards the car park. Ah, there it is! The words 'Clubhouse' written on the side a dead giveaway!

The small cosy room is populated by half a dozen punters and a bevy of very presentable thirty-something ladies busying about their club duties. There's no proper beer on sale, unfortunately, and the TV gives you the impression it would benefit from being tuned in properly, but it passes a half-hour prior to kick-off. My accomplice is happy enough, ploughing through innumerable packets of crisps and cans of fizzy stimulants.

Tonight's action is a Northern Premier League Cup second round match against fellow Division One South side Mickleover Sports. It has certainly captivated the town as 69 hardy souls pack into the ground. We position ourselves behind one goal, in order that my lad can indulge his favourite pastime of stray ball chasing. He looks daggers at several local urchins who move into his territory, doubtless bent on the same mission. With both teams in the top half of the table we're looking forwards to a lively match and to a large extent it doesn't disappoint, the ball pinging around the pitch at the usual breakneck speed and bringing the keepers into play every so often.

One up at half time, the visitors turn the screw in the second and a comedy scramble resulting from a defender's sliced clearance against his own bar finishes with the home keeper prostrate and requiring urgent medical attention to what looks like a damaged finger. The sub keeper - ominously wearing 13 - takes over but is soon picking the ball out of the net and despite Drayton pegging it to 1-2, a

third from the dominant Sports seals the win. A last-minute Drayton goal just massages the score-line.

The ball-chaser and I set off back home, both of our jobs done for the evening.

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

Football for the Dad and his Lad....

06/20