

TT1011-189

TT No.189: *Stuart J Pykett* - Sat 26th February 2011; **Blackpool Rovers** v Fleetwood Hesketh; West Lancs League; Result: 4-1; Attendance: 8 (h/c); Admission and Programme: None.

Having visited Squires Gate many years ago it had always been my intention to visit their closest of neighbours Blackpool Rovers FC as soon as possible. However, when Rovers left the North West Counties league at the end of 97/98, this was put on the back burner.

With my first-choice matches rained off I headed to School Lane, Blackpool for this West Lancashire League game versus Fleetwood Hesketh.

Rovers were some distance clear at the top of the table, with nearest challengers Charnock Richard only managing a draw today the title looks like Rovers' to lose. I'd seen Charnock a week earlier and they looked a very useful side, so it would be interesting to see how Rovers shaped up.

Despite heavy overnight rain the pitch was in excellent condition with plenty of grass on it. Squires Gates' ground is literally 'next door' and if both were at home the same day you could watch both matches at the same time and claim to have visited both grounds!!

Rovers' ground looks as though it had a lot of money spent on it in the early nineties with covered timber accommodation practically all the way round the perimeter, albeit some of it was in a dilapidated condition. There are also remnants of red railings around the ground and they have working floodlights. It would be an excellent venue to visit on a wet day. I'm sure many FGIF readers have visited this ground in its pomp and it would have been an impressive set up indeed. It looks like they were destined for great things but maybe the money ran out I suspect leaving the club in limbo. It really is a shame to see it in this condition but I do like these old grounds and is a 'must do' if you like this sort of thing.

Pride of place goes to what look like two old press boxes (if that's what they are!) on top of the stand on one side of the ground. If one sat up there now, I would suspect you would fall through the stand roof!!

Just three people now run the club and all credit should be given to them for keeping the club going.

The first half was a scrappy affair with Rovers looking anything but top of the table material but they went in one goal to the good at half time. The second half was much better and more competitive and Rovers ran out comfortable 4-1 winners.

No gate was taken and no programme issued and I believe they haven't issued since their NWC league days. The 'crowd' was about eight and some of those seemed to include a few of Blackpool Rovers Women's team! Certainly, a day when the players could be introduced to the crowd on the tannoy if they had one!

A tea bar sold hot pies and the usual variety of confectionary and hot drinks.

What a pity the local community don't support this friendly club when the pub next door was packed watching the Wolves v Blackpool game on T.V. How long can many clubs like this survive? I hope they do.

Rovers have no intention of going back up to the North West Counties League if they win the title, probably a wise decision.

07/20