

TT No.82: Rob Campion - Saturday 9th October 2010; **Marlborough Rovers** v Belton Villa; North Leicestershire League Division. 1; Venue: Moira Miners Welfare; Result: 7-2; Admission/Prog: none; Att: 2 (honest!); Match rating: 3 ½.

Marlborough Rovers are an Ashby-de-la-Zouch based club and were formed in the mid 1970's as a junior set up playing in youth football competitions within the surrounding area. I think this is the first season that they have had an open age side and compete in the North Leicestershire League (NLL). A couple of seasons ago at an Ashby Ivanhoe game one of their officials stated they were going to merge with Rovers to form Ashby Town but this appears to have come to nothing. Another very tenuous link that I'm going to state is that Ivanhoe had an 'A' team playing in the NLL playing games at the Westfield Recreation Ground in Ashby itself. They finished in 2nd place in the 2nd division in the 2008/09 season. Come the start of the 2009/10 season the team seem to have disappeared, but a new club based at the Westfield Rec appears in the form of Deportivo de la Zouch and they finished in 6th place in division 1. They either folded or joined up with Rovers to become the men's first team which would then give the players of Rovers an obvious route into open age football. Again, none of the above is confirmed and it is my conclusion when trying to put two and two together.

Rovers have four grounds they use for their various teams with two being in Ashby itself and two in the nearby Moira. The team in the NLL are playing their home games this season at the Moira Miners Welfare ground in Moira, this though not to be confused with fellow NLL side Moira United's ground who play at a different location within the village.

The following information is taken from the Wikipedia page on Moira itself:

"Moira is a former mining village in North West Leicestershire. It derives its name from the Irish earldom of Moira, one of the titles of the Hastings family whose castle was is nearby Ashby-de-la-Zouch. The former local colliery, Rawdon Colliery also bore a Hastings family name.

For centuries North West Leicestershire has been quarried and mined for coal, limestone, granite and brick clay, and its environmental damage was one of the reasons that it was chosen as the site for the National Forest, which is part of a government funded programme to create more woodland.

The 120 acres (49 ha) National Forest Millennium Discovery Centre, now called CONKERS is on the former Rawdon Colliery site, and its visitor centre features a novel borehole based heating and cooling system.

Moira is the location for a new youth hostel and a camping and caravanning site for the National Forest. The hostel, YHA National Forest is run by YHA and the campsite run by the Camping and Caravanning Club. They both opened, a couple of years ago. 2008.

Another legacy of the area's industrial heritage is the Moira Furnace, a restored 19th century blast furnace. A 2.5 kilometres (1.6 mile) section of the Ashby Canal adjacent to the furnace has also been restored and refilled, although it lacks a navigable link to the rest of the system due to the A42 having been built across its line. The furnace site also includes craft workshops and a small nature reserve.

Moira once had a station on the Midland Railway (later LMS) line from Leicester to Burton-upon-Trent. This closed in September 1964 when passenger services on the line ceased, but the line remains open as a freight route and has been the subject of numerous passenger reopening proposals over the years, so far without success.

Rawdon Colliery, unlike many British pits was not closed as a result of the Government's programme in the mid-1980's following the miner's strike, but simply ran out of viable coal seams. The seams which extended six miles from the shaft, had been worked for some 150 years while some had been worked twice recovering lower grade coal."

Marlborough have started the season impressively winning all five games played (three in the league and two in cup competitions) this season so far. The league games have seen them beat Woodhouse Imperial (3-0), Loughborough Athletic (4-0) and Loughborough Reserves (5-2). Another little fact is that all their games have been played at home with a first away game coming next Saturday with a visit to Sutton Bonington. Opponents Belton Villa have played only two league games recording a win (4-2 @ Loughborough Athletic) and a defeat (5-2 @ home to Loughborough Reserves).

The Moira Miners Welfare ground is located on Bath Lane in the village and is a cracking little ground and one of (if not) the best in the North Leicestershire League. The pitch is fully railed off with permanent dugouts on the near side and a covered stand straddling the half way line on the far side. It is at present one of only four grounds in the NLL that I know of that has cover, with the others being Loughborough FC, Measham Imperial and Moira United. The best way to get to the ground is exit the A42 at junction 11 and take the A444 towards Burton. Stay on the A444 to Overseal and then turn left onto Moira Road (B5003), this turns into Bath Lane and the ground is on the right-hand side.

The game...before anyone starts about the number of goals, I will get this out of the way now. This was the third game in succession that Gary Spooner and myself have seen nine goals in. This was not planned and is a complete fluke and one off with this game being agreed upon several weeks ago before we had witnessed the other two. The first half was a scrappy affair though both sides did not resort to any long ball stuff at all. Both Marlborough and Belton had I would say an even amount of possession and chances and it was no real surprise when the visitors took the lead. It came on 27 minutes and can either be viewed as a piece of brilliance or a complete fluke. Their number 7 hit a lofted shot that went over the keeper's head into the net. This woke the home side up a bit and got a deserved equaliser a minute into stoppage time at the end of the half. The second period saw Marlborough come out with all guns blazing, literally, as they kicked off and

didn't allow Belton to touch the ball before they took the lead after 30 odd seconds from a close-range tap in. Rovers created a couple more good chances before they were awarded a penalty on 53 minutes when a Belton defender handled the ball on the line. The penalty though was a terrible effort which was more akin to something you would see in the Gaelic form of the game. Marlborough did not have to wait long for their third goal with it coming on 56 minutes. A mistake by a Belton defender allowed the home no. 9 to be clean through and finished with aplomb. The hour mark saw the game over as a contest with the home side scoring their fourth goal of the afternoon when a ball in the box was controlled and volleyed into the net. The game then calmed down until the final ten minutes when four goals were scored. On 81 minutes Marlborough made it 5-1, only for Belton to reduce the deficit by making it 5-2 on 83 minutes. The home side then went straight up the other end to make it 6-2. The scoring was complete a minute from time when, following another mistake in the visiting defence the ball was squared across goal with the recipient rounding the keeper and walking the ball into an empty net.

To sum up...I will be very surprised if Marlborough do not win the division this season, if not then any side that finishes above them must be pretty good. They still remain unbeaten this season in all competitions with six victories in six outings. They are a decent footballing side and hopefully in a few years, time will be playing their football in the Leicestershire Senior League.

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