

TT No. 130: Mike Latham - Mon 2 January 2012: Baris Northern Counties East Football League Division One; **Louth Town** 5-0 Grimsby Borough; Attendance: 143; Admission: £4; 28pp Programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 2*.

After my intended visit to Rhayader was scuppered by an early morning postponement I headed east instead. Thanks to the Spar Mid Wales and NCEL websites for superb, up-to-date information. The latter in particular is simply magnificent with the wealth of up-to-date information provided. How different groundhopping is made by the Web-masters' efforts- it's not that long ago that a day like today, after much rain it would have been a nightmare trying to find a new ground to visit on a Bank Holiday.

Louth had suffered an arson attack on their souvenir shop on New Year's Eve but thanks to the efforts of their committee tidying up the debris, this local derby went ahead on a bitterly cold but dry afternoon. Though located about 20 miles from Grimsby Louth is a relatively isolated place and the roads from the motorway were eerily quiet.

In the middle of a housing estate to the north-east of town, the Park Avenue Stadium is approached up a narrow, unmarked entry between houses. Parking was plentiful and I got a warm welcome at the gate. Louth had won 2-1 at Boro' the previous Tuesday and duly completed an emphatic festive double over their local rivals. But, sadly for the neutral the game was effectively over by the 15th minute. Already one-up through Steve Norton's fourth-minute goal, Louth were awarded a penalty and the Boro' goalkeeper was red-carded for a last man foul on Norton. The referee had no choice but to send off the 'keeper and Norton duly converted from the spot.

The outfield player who went in goal was soon later subbed by another player and Norton completed his hat-trick before half-time. The second half drifted along, brightened only by Jamie Coulson's goal before a home player suffered what appeared to be a badly broken leg after he was accidentally caught by a defender after his studs appeared to stick in the ground. After a 15-minute delay he was stretchered off to an awaiting ambulance summoned from Grimsby. I hope he's ok. No-one had any real appetite for the game after that but the final 16 minutes saw Norton score his fourth goal with virtually the last kick of the game.

A small seated stand with club house above it dominates the neat Park Avenue Stadium. It was possible to watch the game from inside the club house, a home official thoughtfully providing a window wiper on a stick to clear condensation from the windows. Many spectators chose this option as the temperatures dipped when the sun dropped below the main stand late in the first-half. The rest of the ground is flat open standing but there is a large scaffold to hold a television gantry on the far side. A decent tea bar was in operation and the 28-page programme, obviously lovingly compiled was excellent. Louth have just two years left on a

lease on the ground I was informed so if you've not been then put it on your list. They clearly have a committed and enthusiastic group of players, committee and supporters. I enjoyed my visit here.

07/20