

**TT No. 178: Mike Latham** - Saturday 3 March 2012; D&D Programmes Central League Cup Round 2; **Maryhill** 2-1 St Anthony's; Att: 80 (h/c); Admission: £4; Raffle ticket: £1; 28pp programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 4\*; Postcode: G20 9AE.

As I set off north on a rainy morning it was my intention to visit Johnstone Burgh, who had high hopes of staging their first home game since 20 August- yes, that's right, 20 August, a gap of nearly seven months. Sadly, though, Keanie Park again succumbed to water-logging after a mid-morning inspection but at least there was time to re-route.

Lochburn Park, home of Maryhill JFC was the next port of call, again a ground prone to postponements after wet spells; happily, a check 'phone call to the friendly secretary confirmed that the 'park was fine.'

Maryhill are a famous old junior club, formed back in 1884 which have played at their current ground since the late 1890s. It's simply wonderful and unique in many ways, the built-up terracing with the narrow playing pitch below creating a natural amphitheatre. Hemmed in by housing, pubs and local industry it's the type of ground that is becoming increasingly rare- visit it while you can.

Maryhill is situated in the north-west of Glasgow and is a traditionally working-class area with a large student population and a rich ethnic mix. There are many of the traditional Glaswegian sandstone tenements on Maryhill Road and adjoining streets and Maryhill JFC's Lochburn Park is situated in a heavily built-up area close to a huge Tesco superstore. Traffic was heavy in the area, perhaps partly because Partick Thistle were at home close-by but there was plenty of street parking on Lochburn Road, adjoining the ground.

Maryhill was known as the Venice of the North for its canals and also for being the centre of the glass industry, with its Caledonia Works and Glasgow Works.

The Forth and Clyde Canal runs nearby and the area is also famous for the hit television detective series Taggart, which was set and filmed in Maryhill. Apparently, fans of the series are regular visitors to the nearby entrance to Maryhill Police Station to have their photographs taken.

Once a semi-rural district on the outskirts of Glasgow Maryhill also housed the barracks that were home to the Scots Greys and the Highland Light Infantry but these were decommissioned during the 1960s. However, the military theme is continued by the Territorial Army unit, the 52nd Lowland, 6th Battalion, the Royal Regiment of Scotland which is based at Walcheren Barracks. The 32 (Scottish) Signal Regiment is also based near Kelvinside, with 105 Regiment, Royal Artillery in nearby Partick.

The ground is one that takes the breath away- they don't build them like this any more. The terracing rises above the pitch and affords simply wonderful views of play from virtually any angle. On the far side the ground is a superb covered

terrace. The club colours of red and black are in evidence throughout and the club house looked in good order. There is a good tea bar and club shop and a superb 28-page programme crammed full of information and historical record.

Maryhill have had their years in the spotlight, twice winning the Junior Cup and enjoying a successful spell in the 1990s. These days, though they lie in the bottom rung of the West Region. Today's opponents from across the city were one level above and a keenly contested game was anticipated.

The pitch was heavy and certainly weighed against constructive football but both sides did their best in what was an eminently watchable and entertaining contest played in good spirit. Maryhill just about edged the tie, taking the lead on the half-hour and extending their advantage with a penalty seven minutes into the second half. The Ants pulled back a goal with fifteen minutes remaining to set up a grandstand finish.

Typical of football in the city I struck up conversations with several friendly spectators during the course of the afternoon, including one veteran supporter who told me his life history of time in the Navy and working on the Fire Service in Glasgow. What was the latter like, I enquired? "Very busy," he replied. He didn't actually say busy but you get the drift.

A wonderfully intimate and atmospheric ground, Lochburn Park is one of my favourite venues to watch football. If you've not been, then take my advice and put it on your list.

07/20