

TT No.244: Mike Latham - Tues 8th May 2012: Huddersfield & District Football League Reserves Division One: **Uppermill Res 0-1 Newsome Res**; Attendance: 30 (h/c); No admission or programme; FGIF Match Rating: 4*; P/C: OL3 7NH.

I had long desired to see a game at Greenfield Paper Mill and on a beautifully clear sunlit evening finally managed it; though it wasn't quite what I expected.

In recent weeks I've been enjoying the football in the Huddersfield & District Football League and the end of season clash in Division One between Uppermill and Newsome fitted the bill. The ground is notoriously hard to find, but a search through Google maps made the job a lot easier. Basically, follow the A635 Holmfirth road out of Greenfield and the car park is on the right-hand side just after the Clarence pub at Waterside just after the junction of Manchester Road and Chew Valley Road.

Waterside Mill dominates the view towards Greenfield, home to a number of small businesses including the respected Greenfield Real Ale Brewery. On the Holmfirth side is the now disused Greenfield Paper Mill, a magnificent edifice and a relic of an industrial past. In the valley bottom, with towering sheep-clad hills and superb views on all sides it's a great location for a football ground.

The players park at Waterside Mill and then embark on a path by the side of the river until they reach the football ground. Even in early May the path is muddy and waterlogged in parts and goodness knows how they manage to get machinery along it to mow the grass. The playing pitch, once reached, is reasonably flat, well grassed and lovingly tendered.

But at this stage of the season, with fixtures drying up, everything is not as it seems. A few of the home players, arriving ready for the game in their neat blue strips were on the car park had a dilemma; one of their players had his dog with him and had no-one to dog-sit while the game was in progress. Being a dog lover and having a spare lead in my car I volunteered for duty and soon was looking after Toby for the next couple of hours, no problem at all.

But walking alongside the river to the ground, with Toby on the lead I soon discovered that the game I'd intended watching wasn't the one scheduled for here. Apparently Uppermill and Newsome had been fixed to play at both first-team and reserve team level; with a clash apparent the first-team game had been switched to Marsden, strange as I thought Diggle were due to play a home game at that ground at the same time. No matter, this was a reserve team game in Division One and an important one at that; with three games left Newsome were one point ahead of Uppermill. And with Toby to look after and the 6-15pm kick-off time fast approaching there was no chance of re-routing.

It is credit to both teams that if I'd not been aware of that information, I'd have happily believed I was watching a first-team game. The game was played at a fast

and furious pace and well refereed; the importance of the game was readily apparent. The views were stunning, the temperature much warmer than in recent days and the even the midges, notorious for this ground after speaking to fellow travellers stayed away until late in the game.

Just ten minutes remained when Newsome won the game, their no12 striking a clean shot past the home 'keeper from fully 25 yards. It was a goal fit to win any game. The visitors' joy was unconfined and the home side took it in good part. Newsome survived a late rally to hold on to three valuable points. After the final whistle sounded I re-united Toby with his owner, set off back down the riverside path to my car and reflected that if this was a reserve game then the Huddersfield & District League is well worth watching. I've barely scratched the surface in the league this season but intend to delve further next. And if you get chance to watch football at the Greenfield Paper Mill ground then take it, even if it turns out to be a reserve game. I've rarely seen football played at a more scenic or interesting setting.

07/20