

TT No. 103: Mike Latham - Tuesday 12 February 2013: North West Counties League Division One; **West Didsbury & Chorlton** 3-2 Chadderton; Attendance: 46; Admission: £4; Programme: £1.50; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

Midweek football in the depths of winter can easily become a trial rather than an enjoyment. With the temperature gauge dropping towards zero on a bitterly cold but dry evening I must admit to having second thoughts as I de-iced the car and headed off past the Trafford Centre on the M60 towards Manchester suburbia.

But the reward for my bravery was to experience a really enjoyable match played in great spirit in the company of several groundhopping friends from near and far. That's the beauty of our hobby- without prior planning I went to a game 20 miles or so from home and without knowing in advance who'd be there I knew at least one-fifth of the crowd. We passed the evening having a good chin-wag while a compelling game unfolded before our eyes.

It was a historic occasion, too- the first fully floodlit fixture at this most friendly of clubs. As the programme explained:

OUR FIRST FULL FLOODLIT FIXTURE

Tonight, is another little piece of club history as it will be the first time the club has started a league game at Brookburn Road under floodlights. Before tonight we have only used the lights for the second half of games including the very first time, back in August, when Northwich Villa were our visitors. After tonight we have a further three midweek games under lights so please get behind the team and support us again on these evening games if you possibly can.

Newcomers to the NWCL this year, WD&C's ground is at the end of Brookburn Road and motorists can take their car into the ground after paying admission at a wooden hut. Despite being in Manchester suburbia the ground has a rural feel with its tree-lined surrounds. There is an excellent clubhouse and small seated stand behind the far goal is the main facility. It's apparent that the club has a core of committed and hard-working officials to go along the playing base; everyone connected with the club was friendly and pleasant. One of the best-loved clubs in these parts among groundhoppers is Trafford FC, who have since moved into the Evo-Stik League from the NWCL; in many ways WD&C remind me of them; a lovely club to visit.

The programme outlines the club's history- formed as Christ Church AFC in 1908, West played in the Manchester Alliance and then joined the Lancashire and Cheshire League after the First World War, changing their name to West Didsbury AFC. They played at the Christie Playing Fields until the mid-1980s and moved to their present ground at the end of Brookburn Road in 1997 after a nomadic existence for the best part of a decade. A further name change, in 2003 reflected

their new location in Chorlton. They joined the Manchester League in 2006 and were successful in their application to join the NWCL in 2012.

The floodlights were excellent, the pitch in good condition and a terrific game ensued. Chadderton played some lovely football at times and led 2-0 at the interval, one of their goals, a sublime, curling shot earning admiring nods from the veteran linesman in front of where we stood. The pace of the game was unrelenting and the players from both sides gave their all- but then NWCL football is usually like this.

The game changed suddenly after, without warning, Chadderton had a player red carded for two yellows, the second of which seemed to be for kicking the ball away. I am a bit hazy on the exact details as I was engaged in a detailed discussion about football grounds to visit within a 20-mile radius of Berwick-upon-Tweed at the time.

The hosts spied their chance, stepped up a gear and fought back in splendid style, sealing their comeback with a looping header from sub Tommy Walsh from a right-wing cross.

It was great entertainment, with the added bonus of a good programme (with insert from the original postponed game) and the good company I've mentioned previously. And the ground was only ten minutes or so from the M60- I'll add this ground to the list of local midweek grounds I like to visit. Several present, were completing the champagne job of the NWCL (again) but made do with coffee.

Finally, a quick plug for the fantastic NWCL website, run by Ian Templeman- what a great resource this is- I hope everyone in the league appreciates the great job done by Ian and his colleagues.

04/20