

**TT No.50: *Chris Freer*** - Sat October 20th 2012; **Glasshoughton Welfare v Armthorpe Welfare**; NCEL Premier Division; Score: 3-2; Attendance: 82; Entertainment value: 4/5.

As a young lad I tended to watch Grandstand or World of Sport every Saturday afternoon, as my excursions to see live action were few and far between. As such I actually took a liking to Rugby League, in the heady days of commentator Eddie Waring and his .."ull, 'unslet and Wigan...aaaayyy' and got to hear about exotic Northern towns like Warrington, St Helens, Widnes and Swinton, places I knew I was never destined to visit. Everybody has to have a favourite - a 'pet' team - and mine was Castleford, through no other reason than I liked the name, and they were invariably bottom of the table - always support the underdog!

I followed their fortunes week in, week out and got to consider myself an armchair 'Cas' fan, without ever once venturing within 50 miles of their Wheldon Road home.

Nearly half a century later, I finally get to visit Castleford, but not to watch the oval ball game. Today I am in town just to try a few beers, before taking the 20-minute walk to the nearby suburb of Glasshoughton, home to Northern Counties East Premier side, Glasshoughton Welfare.

First I have a family matter to organise, depositing my son at Meadowhall Interchange to meet his mate who now lives in Sheffield, Then it's the 50-minute cattle train to Leeds, calling at every station imaginable before finally depositing me at Castleford where it takes a while to get my bearings before tracking down my first port-of-call, the Glassblower, the local Wetherspools. It's busy but I find a decent table, order up the large Veggie Brekkie, and avail myself of a cracking pint of Blindmans Icarus, rich, dark, malty and creamy, before tucking into the fodder, complete with its extra (third) fried egg!

Suitably stuffed, I reason that I should walk this off by heading slightly out of town to the Shoulder of Mutton. The local CAMRA magazine - the O to K - features an advert placed by this establishment where it proclaims that esteemed beer writer Roger Protz rates it as 'one of Britain's greatest pub's'. I wish I could testify to the accuracy of that statement, but sadly although I arrive at 12.10 - and the advert states the pub is open from 11.00 every day - the lights are out, there's post on the mat, and no sign of life is to be had. Oh well, I'll spend my money elsewhere then, which proves to be at the Junction, in the centre of the town.

This pub has a slightly dishevelled feel about it, like a town centre local that just gets on with what it does. Bare floorboards, a dog in an indoor kennel, groups of people sat round discussing the racing, classic British heavy rock playing in the background, local micro-brewed beers on the bar - I think I like this place! In fact, I would dally for more than the one pint - an excellent drop of Great Newsome

Frothingham Red - if I didn't need to check out the George V Working Men's Club in Glasshoughton.

This is a five minute walk from the football ground, and when I finally manage to get in - I am unfamiliar with the buzzer entry system employed to keep certain elements out of clubland - there is a typical gathering of folk who all seem to know each other, and have one eye on the live football on one telly, and the racing on the other. The steward, who seems quite put out that I was trying to get in without pushing his little buzzer, nevertheless pours me a pint of Acorn Tangerine Dream, my choice from a trio of beers which also includes non-Yorkshire brewed Tetley's Bitter, and Sam Smith's OBB, which I often find a little too sweet for my tastes. Sadly, the Acorn is a typical me-too golden beer with that sickly citrusy hop to the fore. Should have gone for the Sams after all!

Time to head up the road to the Glasshoughton Centre, which consists primarily of a modern-looking building featuring offices, changing rooms, and a clubhouse which is a little short on beer choice - just the usual suspects despite team shirts bearing an Outgang Brewery motif - and snacking material, with no list to peruse. Wot, no pies in Yorkshire, not even meaty ones! There's a seated stand opposite the clubhouse, and a section of covered raised terracing behind one goal. It's also possible to watch the game from outside the ground, so no need to pay, as one bloke doesn't. In fact, when they open the gates just after half time, he still prefers to stand looking over the wall, even being joined by a second voyeur.

And so, to the action, with the battle between two mid-to-lower table Welfares, in the form of home team Glasshoughton and visiting Armthorpe, managed by the splendidly distinctive figure of ex-League pro Leo Fortune-West. The game is barely a minute old before mishandling by the Armthorpe keeper presents a home striker with a toe-poked opener and although the visitors overcome their shaky start to make a game of it, the home side are 3-1 up by half time and looking comfortable. Armthorpe's fight-back starts soon after the break with a second, and at 3-2 it could either way. Sadly, for the visitors, the referee's patience - which has been tested throughout by mouthy players from both sides - finally breaks and one of their number exits stage right.

There then follows a thirty-minute spell of manic football, with the ten men's push for an equaliser inevitably leaving gaping holes at the back for the Glasshoughton strike force to advance on the keeper and put the outcome beyond doubt. Only they don't. Despite at least half-a-dozen - and probably more - one-on-ones with the beleaguered custodian, brave goalkeeping and some downright rank bad finishing prevents the score-line from reaching double figures. A Rugby League score is there for the asking. I wonder what Eddie Waring would have made of it all?

There's more on my blog at <http://flynn123.wordpress.com/>

Welfare for the Common Man...

04/20

