

TT No.60: Mike Latham - Sat 17 November 2012; **Cumbernauld United** 0-0 Forfar West End; Emirates Scottish Junior Cup Third Round: Admission: £5; No programme; Raffle ticket: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

Another day of Scottish Junior Cup action enticed me to Guy's Meadow in Cumbernauld where there was a meeting of West and East juniors in what promised to be a tightly contested cup-tie.

So, it proved as two very similar set-up sides fought out a fast-flowing game that rarely threatened a goal. If I was a betting man, I'd forecast that next weekend's replay in Forfar will be similarly tight and may well be decided on free-kicks taken from the penalty mark.

Despite the disappointment of the scoreless draw- and let's face it a 0-0 on a visit to a new ground is always an anti-climax, there was plenty to commend a visit to this unusual and interesting ground.

For Cumbernauld, think Skelmersdale, a new town with some of worst architecture imaginable in its town centre, dating back to the time when ugly monstrosities were considered fashionable. I drove around the area before the game and simply couldn't imagine what it must be like to live in this land of concrete and roundabouts. But despite once regularly featuring amongst the top of Britain's Crap Towns, Cumbernauld has enjoyed something of a revival in recent years, its decent quality and affordable housing and good motorway links making it a more attractive location than first meets the eye.

It's certainly easy to get to, the M73 from J4 of the M74 near Glasgow being very quiet. I thought back several years to my previous visit to the town whilst ticking off the Scottish League 42. I visited Clyde's ground at nearby Broadwood for a cup-tie against (then) big-spending Dundee for whom Fabrizio Ravanelli scored a hat-trick in the space of five minutes after emerging from the bench- a remarkable exhibition of top-quality finishing that lingers long in the memory.

Alongside the New Town lies a portion of old Cumbernauld known as the Village. It's here that the junior football club is based and the ground is on Old Glasgow Road, once a major thoroughfare, now a quiet cul-de-sac.

The village centre has stone buildings, pubs, shops and take-aways and the Guy's Meadow ground is situated close-by in a wooded valley with a huge banking of trees behind the main covered terrace and some concrete blocks on the grassed slopes opposite.

Junior football dates back to the early 1900s in these parts when the initial Cumbernauld United was formed in what was then a small rural village. They folded just after the First World War and, a new club, Cumbernauld Thistle, emerged in 1929 before folding ten years later.

The present club was formed in 1964 and played their first junior game three years later. By this time Cumbernauld had been transformed into a bustling new town. They played their early matches at nearby Kilsyth, then at the Ravenswood ground in the town before developing their present ground a few years later.

Kenny Dalglish played two seasons here as a teenager, toughening up in the cut and thrust world of the juniors before going on to hit the heights with Celtic and Liverpool. The Lisbon Lions, Celtic's 1967-European Cup-winning team played the official opening game at Ravenswood Stadium in May 1968; then a strong Manchester United team officially opened the new ground at Guy's Meadow in April 1974.

The playing surface at Guy's Meadow had already been prepared by the Council and a pavilion, covered enclosure and terracing constructed. Further developments were made and a social club was constructed on the site. Later, a number of five-a-side pitches were built and these are still used regularly.

In the depths of winter Junior Cup-ties kick-off at 1-45pm and a decent crowd of spectators had gathered, many having enjoyed some time in the social club, where there was a warm welcome and decent, comfortable accommodation together with an interesting display of club photographs and other football memorabilia.

The pitch was well-grassed but heavy in places and a downpour of hail in the later stages made conditions difficult. Despite that both teams did their best to provide some typical cup-tie cut and thrust. Forfar, who have re-built this year after temporarily going into abeyance looked well-organised and more than a match for the home side.

Gregory's Girl, a cult Scottish film from 30 years ago was filmed hereabouts and my companion was still recovering from the excitement of meeting its principal female part, Dee Hepburn recently. I could get little out of him as the cup-tie unfolded in front of us. For football supporters of a certain vintage Gregory's Girl was the ultimate fantasy- this was far from fantasy football, but I still greatly enjoyed my visit to this friendly club.

04/20