

**TT No.95: *Mike Latham*** - Easter Monday 21 April 2014: West Lancashire Football League Division One; **Bolton County** 0-3 Hurst Green; Attendance: 50 (h/c); No programme or admission; FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

Bolton was once such a hotbed of football that it had its own football league, the Bolton Combination which prospered for many years. These days, amateur football clubs in the town compete usually in either the Lancashire Amateur League or the West Lancashire League. The latter has several representatives from the town with Ladybridge, CMB and Tempest United located virtually side by side in the west, between Lostock and Westhoughton.

Bolton County are in the east, located in a semi-rural position just off the Radcliffe Road, close to Leverhulme Park and not too far from Bolton Wanderers' lamented Burnden Park and the Bromwich Street training ground which staged many local finals.

Bolton County AFC, to give them their full title, were formerly known as Bolton County Grammar School Old Boys. The current club was established in 1948, but its origins go back to the 1920s, the club falling into abeyance during the Second World War. The club was renamed in 1982 when Bolton County Grammar School ceased to exist.

Bolton County achieved FA Charter Development Club status in 2007 and run more than 20 teams, ranging from the Under-7s to the open age sides. Like many clubs they exist thanks to voluntary contributions and help from enthusiasts who put so much time and effort into grass-roots football.

It was a glorious Easter Monday afternoon and I didn't feel like venturing far so this game looked enticing. Since joining the West Lancashire League Hurst Green have adapted really well and they went into this game still with outside hopes of promotion to the top-flight.

The pitch was well grassed but dry and bobbly and the visitors adapted better to the difficult conditions, scoring early and establishing a 3-0 lead by half-time. There was no further scoring. The ground is typical of clubs at this level, the pitch railed-off on three sides with dug-outs and a club house and car-park behind the nearside goal.

The West Lancashire League is an excellently-run league and has a well-maintained and informative website. I've got just one team to do before I complete the league but will still make re-visits when the opportunity arises as I enjoy watching football at this level and clubs like Bolton County epitomises what the spirit of grassroots football is all about.