

**TT No.65: *Mike Latham*** - Saturday 21 February 2015- Carlsberg West Cheshire League Division One: **South Liverpool** 4-2 West Kirby; Attendance: 60 (h/c); Admission: by donation; Programme: 20pp, £1; Rating: 4\*.

It's always really gratifying to visit a club that is on the up having refused to die, a club with a soul and a great infrastructure albeit in modest surroundings. Such a club is South Liverpool FC.

As a Horwich RMI follower I well remember seeing many games between RMI and South Liverpool, with their familiar white shirts, black shorts and red socks. I saw them at Chorley many times too and players such as Jimmy Case, John Aldridge, Peter Houghton and Joe Hinnigan rose through the ranks and went on to have notable careers. Other stalwarts that come to mind are John McInnes, Laurence Iro and Peter Eales while managers such as Brian Griffiths and John King had notable non-league careers.

A visit to Holly Park in Garston was not for the faint-hearted. The club fought a long and ultimately fruitless battle against constant vandalism that ended in their profitable social club being burnt down. I remember going there for one Sunday game against Matlock Town in early spring- the ground was an eyesore, evidence of vandalism everywhere you looked but it was a club with a soul- the people were friendly and committed to battling on through adversity.

Hyder Jawad wrote a superb club history of South Liverpool, recalling their famous Welsh Cup win just before the Second World War against Cardiff City, the day Hungarian Ferenc Puskas guested for the club and the visit of a Nigerian team plus their ultimately fruitless attempts to gain election to the Football League. I remember meeting Hyder once on the slopes of Grundy Hill and it was great to see his legacy for history and class writing lives on. South Liverpool produce a magnificent 20-page programme for home games with a nice balance between the past and the present- I heard the programme editor proudly announce it had sold out on the day.

Reforming in 1991 and working their way back up through the Liverpool County Premier League and now the West Cheshire League, South Liverpool have achieved Charter Standard Club status from the FA and have many junior teams and a ladies' section under their wing. Home is now North Field, Jericho Lane in Otterspool, about a mile and a half or so from their old ground which was finally demolished to make way for the construction of Liverpool South Parkway railway station. In between the former and the current ground lies historic Aigburth cricket ground, home of Liverpool CC and a regular venue for Lancashire CCC.

It was a bitterly cold but dry and sunny afternoon and a bracing walk along the superbly developed Otterspool promenade overlooking the Mersey, with magnificent sweeping views was just an ideal pre-match hors d'oeuvre. Jericho

Lane is a busy road and so the club has thoughtfully provided a parking area inside the ground for spectators, neatly roped-off.

The ground is typical of ones in this league which in my experience is excellently run and administered. The pitch is railed-off with dug-outs facing one another and a changing room block bearing the legend of South Liverpool FC dominates one corner. From here hot drinks and snacks were available as well as the programme. It was apparent that the club has a solid infrastructure with several club officials busying themselves in the various tasks that are needed to put on a match-day. Around 60 spectators lined the modest ground and they were clearly committed to the cause but pervaded a friendly air.

South Liverpool FC therefore is a club with tradition and roots and one which encourages and champions loyalty to the cause. Current manager Martin Ryman is long serving and loyal and the club clearly retains its heartbeat.

The home side went into the game leading the First Division with a record of 15 wins and four draws from 19 games. But they fell behind after 25 minutes to a committed visiting side who fully deserved their lead and who also scored the last goal. That first goal sparked the home side into life and South Liverpool went on to record a convincing victory in a hard fought but entertaining game that I thought was superbly refereed.

I really enjoyed my visit here and would heartily recommend Travellers visiting South Liverpool FC.

04/20