

## RAMBLINGS REPORTS 2019-20

updated on 16/09/19



14/09/19 - Action from Northallerton Town (black & white) v Barnoldswick Town (FAV2Q) 2-3

**R No.08: WebEd** - Saturday 14th September 2019; **Northallerton Town v Barnoldswick Town**; FA Vase 2<sup>nd</sup> Qualifying Round; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: The Calvert Stadium; Ainderby Road; Northallerton; North Yorks; DL7 8HA; Result: 2-3; Admission: £6; Programme: Yes - 32pp/£1.50; Attendance: 131 - REPORT TO FOLLOW

**R No.07: WebEd** - Saturday 7th September 2019; **Horbury Town v Boroughbridge**; West Yorkshire Football League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2.30pm; Venue: Slazenger Sports Club; Main Street; Horbury; West Yorks; WF4 5EH; Result: 1-0; Admission: Free; Programme: Yes (but not today!); Attendance: 32

It's another hot sunny day and I'm on the road again travelling over the county boundary and into West Yorkshire. I'm heading for the outskirts of Wakefield where Horbury Town Football Club are entertaining newly-promoted Boroughbridge in a West Yorkshire League Premier Division fixture. This is one of my favourite competitions and if recent trips to Carlton Athletic and Leeds City are anything to go by then I'm in for another great afternoon's entertainment. Although I'm not an avid paper-chaser like many of our hopping brethren (most matches I attend are paperless these days), I am of the understanding that the club also issues programmes for all its home matches which will be a real bonus for me.

With on-going motorway roadworks continuing on the M62 over the weekend, it's just my luck that the junction I need to come off at (number 31) is closed to all traffic, necessitating a bit of a detour. I exit the motorway at the junction before which takes me through Wakefield city centre. The extra ten to fifteen minutes

added onto the journey doesn't prove to be a major problem and the last few miles through the leafy residential suburbia are easily covered arriving at my destination well ahead of kick-off.

The name Horbury incidentally is attested in 1086 as (H)orberie and is derived from Old English *horu* 'dirty land' and *burh* which translates as 'filthy fortification' or 'stronghold on muddy land'. The name possibly referred to a fortification near an old fording point of the River Calder which runs alongside the ground.

Based at the impressive Slazenger's Sports Centre the club is reached off the main A642 (Wakefield to Huddersfield road) by turning left into Daw Lane and then almost immediately by taking a sharp right into Southfield Lane before going over a tight railway bridge. A narrow entrance (marked) leads to the club but beware the height restriction gantry - this certainly makes it difficult for the male driver of a works transit van in front of me who realises just in time that he can't go any further and has to pull over onto the verge allowing the convoy of queuing cars to pass by. With the playing field coming into view there is plenty of room along the driveway and in the adjoining car parks for motorists to find a space. Phew!!

The Slazenger's Sports Club is a multi-sport facility built in the 1940's and has served the local community since with high grade sports facilities catering for football, cricket, hockey, tennis and bowls. The club has a long and illustrious history, first as the sports and social venue for workers of the local Slazenger factory; from where it gets its name. It can trace its roots back to its time as a destination for the workers of Slazenger Sports Company based at Horbury Bridge. Since its original founding, the parent company has come and gone from the area, but the name is retained in the independent club. The Sykes Sports Goods Factory (which merged with Slazenger in the 1940's) had a wealth of sports teams, though were based in Horbury Bridge. As the company developed and the factory grew, a larger facility was required to serve the employees. The site was chosen as it was close to the factory, and allowed a wide range of sports to be hosted. It was once the home of the Horbury Fever Isolation Hospital, but was bought from Horbury Council in the late 1940's. Since the 1980's though, it has operated as a totally independent club by members for members and the local community. The site has developed over that time and now offers some excellent turf pitches, a caged floodlit synthetic all-weather sports surface and a crown green for bowling. The club also has a fully-licensed bar, lounge, conservatory and function room for its members.

Horbury Town FC itself is found on an expansive self-contained site with wonderful elevated views of the surrounding countryside. Access is next to the impressive new light-coloured brick-built pavilion constructed here about four years ago. The building comprises of changing rooms and an equipment store at the nearest end with a smart purpose-built and well-stocked tea bar (called the Red Café) at the other. Look out for the signage (including a Player of the Match awards board) and large red and black flag (fashioned in the club colours) catching the breeze on the outside wall. A row of picnic-tables and accompanying parasols are neatly arranged in front of the pavilion. From the far end you can catch a glimpse of the spire belonging to the lovely St Peter and St Leonards church.

The main pitch which has a beautifully manicured surface is reached by players in the corner. It has a marked side to side slope (dropping down noticeably to the left-hand side of the field if you stand behind the nearest goal). It is fully enclosed by a neat white plastic post and rail perimeter fence (similar at first sight to those found along the gallops straddling Newmarket Heath!) which is a recent addition. Pride of place also goes to the brand-new 50-seater stand (with red and black plastic seats) complete with the club name on its fascia which is set back behind the fence and offset to the two Perspex dug outs (marked Home and Away) further along the pitch sited close to half-way. six other seats (similar to director's chairs) are placed alongside each other are found behind the goal line nearest the pavilion.

Today's game sees the visit of North-Yorkshire based side Boroughbridge Town to the SSC. I always find it a bit of an anomaly when clubs out of the normal league membership catchment compete in a seemingly mis-placed league. Although it would appear geographically better for them to play in the York Football League for example, I imagine that being close to the A1 makes it easier to travel to away games and this suits them. Just a thought. With both sides in the top half (4<sup>th</sup> v 8<sup>th</sup>) a good game is in prospect and that's the way it turns out. The hosts win a thoroughly absorbing and really close contest by a solitary goal scored by young forward Gibril Bojang (39) who slots the ball home following some good build up play by captain Captain Luke Playford just before the break. Being behind the lens taking action pictures can sometimes make it difficult to record the scorer and goal time. But I get lucky today as one of home fans helps me out by opening the club's *twitter* page on his smart phone to reveal the all-important details after being posted immediately on-line. What great service!

The match played on a terrific pitch in perfect weather conditions attracted just over thirty spectators including a fellow traveller Michael who had travelled up from Nottingham by train for the game. We spent the final ten minutes of the match swapping hopping tales including news that another WYFL Premier Division side, Ilkley FC, could also be issuing this season. Watch this space. Sadly, I'm paperless once again on my travels as the club editor is still on holiday and the club (regular issuers in this league) hasn't produced a programme for their game today. Sods Law! The affable and helpful Chairman Paul Howard (a former player for NCEL side Pickering Town FC and FA Level 2 coach) who is on hand in the tea bar when I arrive takes my details and promises to send me a future copy in the post. Phew!

It had been another terrific afternoon's football and a great hop to a cracking ground in the WYFL. A visit to this really friendly club on the banks of the River Calder comes highly recommended to all football ground collectors. For more details about the club check out the generic *FA Full-Time* site covering the league and the club's website, *twitter* and *Facebook* pages. The joys of hopping continue. Have fun wherever you go even if it turns out to be paperless!!

**R No.06: WebEd** - Saturday 31st August 2019; **Bubwith White Swan** v Wheldrake; York Football League Division Two; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Bubwith Playing Field;

Main Street; Bubwith; Selby; East Yorks; YO8 6LX; Result: 4-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 5

Could this be what hoppers often refer to as a Double-Header? The purpose of my trip over to Selby today can best be described as 'killing two birds with one stone'. Please don't tell my wife I've said this for goodness sake as she has just renewed our subscription with the RSPB! As a keen MAMIL\* I'm taking part in the *Selby Three Swans* cycling sportive (to raise funds for *Yorkshire Cancer Research*) which starts and finishes in the town tomorrow and have decided (upon the advice of organisers) to register a day early. For those who like wearing tight-fitting lycra (all part of my ongoing mid-life crisis you understand) this seems a good logistical idea and will no doubt save time by doing the necessary paperwork a day early. It also means I can use my trip to double-up with essential Saturday football watching duties in the vicinity. After signing in at the Summit Adventure Centre registration point, I collect an envelope containing my riding number, micro-chip timing sicker and race info just after mid-day allowing enough time to get through the busy town traffic and head out to a local game.

Before leaving home my mid-morning list of possibilities is down to just three games (all fixtures in the York Football League): Cliffe FC (v Marston Green) in Division One; Bubwith White Swan FC (v Wheldrake in Division Two and Selby Oylmpia FC (v York St John's University) in Division Three. With the postponement of the latter I'm quickly down to a choice of two and so opt for Bubwith leaving a trip to Cliffe for another day. It takes about fifteen minutes to cover the six miles and I soon reach the village whose name incidentally means *Bubba's Wood*, Bubba being a Scandinavian male name. It is listed as *Bobewyth* in the 11th-century accounts of Selby Abbey and in the Domesday Book is written as *Bubuid* in case you wondered. You pass the White Swan pub (surprise, surprise) in the centre of the village before turning right into the modern Leisure and Sports centre car park (signed at the entrance). The sports hall which has a licensed bar runs events and weekly classes (according to an advert near reception) with Zumba, Tai Chi, BoxFit and Salsa on the keep-fit menu. The adjoining Bubwith Centre is also used by the local community for private parties and the Youth Club. The site holds three tennis courts used by the Bubwith Tennis Club.

The playing field which shares its facilities with football and cricket, is found around the back of this building which also houses the changing rooms at the far end. It's a bit of a trek from here (beyond the roped-off cricket square) to reach the main football pitch which is marked lengthways over on the opposite side of the tree-lined field. There are no spectator facilities or dug-outs apart from a picnic seat close to half-way on the left. Behind this is a mini basketball post and back-board which appear to have seen better days. Look out too for some old training floodlights (resembling telegraph poles) which are positioned on either side of the pitch - peeking out of the trees and now covered in foliage, I doubt if they are any longer in use. There are also some portable cricket cover frames buried in the long grass behind the furthest goal.

Although fixtures in the top divisions of the York Football League have already started (the Premier began a couple of weeks back), it's the opening day of the

season for clubs in Division Two. It's been a bit of a wait but this appears to be an intriguing game as visitors Wheldrake (last season's champions in D3) are making their debut at this level. Thankfully before kick-off the rain is replaced by bright warm sunshine - good job too as I've left my anorak at home! It's the hosts who settle more quickly and net an early two goal lead catching their opponents (who are missing several players today) completely off-guard with quick-fire goals converted by Jordan Nason (9) and Ben Olson (11) scored within the space of two minutes. The visitors pull one back when Dan Zimer (28) nips in at the far post to strike the ball home before Nason (42) grabs his second of the game just before half-time to make it 3-1. With honours fairly even after the break it's Bubwith who score the only goal of the half as Martin Howson (85) completes the scoring to give his side a well-deserved 4-1 win. The match played on a very wide well grassed pitch attracts only a handful of spectators including fellow ground collector Nick a smashing guy who has travelled up from Worksop to get his fix. Using the handle *Grass Hopper* he documents his travels on his dedicated twitter page with posts including photos and details of the clubs he has visited including many in this league. If you like tweeting check out his tweets! As expected, neither a programme nor refreshments are on offer for today's match.

Although not technically a Double Header this has been another terrific hop in the flatlands of Selby. Although slightly off the beaten track visitors here will get a warm welcome from everyone at the club details of which can be found on the excellent York Football League website (have I ever mentioned this before?). Owing to the open nature of the ground it might be better to choose a game in favourable weather. In the mean-time have fun wherever you go. And if you want to get fit, it's never too late to get into cycling. It's a wonderful sport - in case you have reservations you don't have to don all that trendy spandex, but it does help!!  
\* MAMIL - means *Middle Aged Man In Lycra* but you knew that already.

**R No.05: WebEd** - Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019; **Hessle Sporting Club** v Howden; Humber Premier League Division One; Kick-Off: 6.30pm; Venue: Hessle Recreation Ground; Park Avenue; Hessle; Hull; East Yorks; HU13 ONG; Result: 4-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 13

My destination tonight, the Hessle recreation ground, home of Humber Premier League side Hessle Sporting Club FC, is literally a big stone's throw from *FGIF* HQ (not a big stone but a big throw!). Although it's only 1.2 miles from home it's not the nearest ground from my doorstep. In fact, football travellers with a statistical bent may be interested to know that it ranks third on my 'hopping from home distance travelled' charts behind two other local clubs (who both ply their trade in the East Riding County League): namely Costello FC (1.1 miles) a new side playing at the Costello Playing Field situated on a pitch next to the superb Hull athletics stadium and the nearest, Malt Shovel FC (1.0 mile) who are based on the 3G pitch at the well-appointed Sirius Academy off Pickering Road.

I arrive with time to spare ahead of kick-off amid darkening skies which signal an imminent thunderstorm. It's lovely to meet up with football club chairman Charlie Walker (a retired PE teacher) who gives me a potted history of the club and takes me on a whistle-stop tour of the superb pavilion as the players complete their pre-

match talks. The football club is part of the Hessle SC charitable foundation which provides sporting and social opportunities for all ages within the area. A quick glimpse at the emblem shows that the football club was formed in 1976 playing matches initially in the ERCL with varying degrees of success until joining the newly formed Humber Premier League in 2006-07. After finishing as runners up in Division One they were promoted to the Premier Division where they remained for two seasons before dropping back down again at the end of 2010-11. Despite a real struggle on the pitch, finishing in bottom position in three of the last five seasons they have remained in this competition ever since.

However, there is a renewed optimism this campaign after the recent appointment of new coach Greg Beswick who travels over from York for each game joining his brother Graham at the helm. His partner Rachel who fills in my *FGIF Match Stats Card* with the home line-up, is also the new club physio. During the last few years the club has grown as a footballing hub for the town and now runs numerous sides (over 30 teams I am led to believe) including thriving junior and girls football sections. A couple of years ago, the club ran a successful weekend tournament attracting over 180 teams to the 'recca' (as it's referred to here) during the record-breaking weekend. A commemorative framed shirt donated and signed by ex- Arsenal FC star Martin Keown hangs proudly on the wall after he attended the event as guest of honour.

Charlie explained that the club is also proud of its on-site facilities which include a superb new brick changing pavilion built four years ago now with the assistance of local funding and a welcomed *Football Foundation* grant. It's a superb building fronted by a smart glass front door (with multi mini club logos etched into it) which leads to four changing rooms and a smart trophy cabinet, crammed full of silverware, won mostly by the club's junior sides. A plaque on the wall commemorates the official opening of the pavilion in 2015. Beyond is a lovely function room (accessed by its own separate entrance at the far end) complete with chairs and tables as well as an adjacent tea bar with hatch in the corner selling a range of hot and cold food throughout the evening.

The main pitch is marked out on the far side (to the left) of the tree-lined field which is about one hundred yards from here. Two synthetic dug-outs with mini benches straddle the half-way line on the right with a perimeter rope set up part way along both sides. For a council owned site, the playing surface is in pretty good nick. It's the last round of early season midweek kick-offs in the league programme and tonight's game sees the visit of bottom placed Howden AFC to the 'recca'. The Minstermen are in desperate need of points having made a dreadful start as their playing stats confirm: L 2-1 v Goole; L 1-5 v Bridlington Town Res and L 1-7 v Kingfields. The hosts have fared slightly better with their results - L 0-4 v East Riding Rangers; W 4-3 v Beverley Town Reserves and L 0-6 v Reckitts Res making them favourites in what could be termed an early basement battle.

The result goes according to the form book with Hessle winning the match comfortably by a 4-1 score-line. They take a three-goal lead through Callum O'Connor (5); Sam Leach (17) and Luke Owen (59) before Robbie Tomlinson (68) pulls one back from the penalty spot. There's just enough time for sub Graham

Doyle (86) to add a fourth, also from the penalty mark to round things off and claim three points to move into the top half of the fourteen-team table. A dozen or so spectators gather to watch the match (which is expertly refereed by young local whistler Spencer Pearson). He plays the full ninety minutes as proceedings finish in what is near darkness with a couple of lightning flashes and thunder rumbles to illuminate the distant sky in the closing stages. For the first time this season I witness the use of the 'sin-bin' as visiting striker Josh Lamming is banished for an indiscretion with ten minutes to go. When the Howden bench realise that he should be back on it was well into time added on and his return lasts only a matter of seconds! Thankfully I manage to head back to the car just as the heavens open but get a good soaking after returning to the field when I discover my hoodie is still hanging on the perimeter rope. Doh!

During the game I also get into conversation with club secretary Alan Hall, who is also running the line this evening. He's a lovely guy who works tirelessly behind the scenes, running some of the younger sides and refereeing. For his sins he also follows the Tigers and both of the city's rugby league sides. A week ago, he travelled to watch City play Tranmere in the league cup. After getting stuck in busy traffic on the M6 he arrived half an hour late at Prenton Park missing two goals in their 3-0 victory!

I thoroughly recommend a visit to the Hessle recreation ground if you are in the area. You will certainly receive a warm welcome by everyone at the Hessle Sporting Club when you go. More details about the club can be found on the generic *FA Full-Time* site covering the HPL as well as the regularly updated club *twitter* and *Facebook* social media feeds. The joys of hopping locally continue. Have fun however far you decide to travel.

**R No.04: WebEd** - Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2019; **Garforth Town** v Colne; FA Cup Preliminary Round; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: Bannister Prentice Stadium; Cedar Ridge; Garforth; West Yorks; LS25 2PF; Result: 0-4; Admission: £6; Programme: Yes, 24pp; Attendance: 168

It's FA Cup day and I'm heading over to the outskirts of Leeds for my footy fix, the eagerly awaited Preliminary Round tie between Garforth Town and Colne. Well, let's rephrase that: I would be if I hadn't got a flat car battery. Being a Bank Holiday weekend, this has literally put the proverbial spanner in the hopping works and, it's pretty much touch and go whether the AA patrol officer can still get to me within the next forty minutes (the latest deadline to still give me enough time to reach my intended destination). I head back in doors and wait. For some reason I sit and look at the phone thinking it might speed things up. Thankfully the new App (on my android device) allays my hopping fears by confirming on screen that help is now on its way and will be arriving at the allotted time. It does and a lovely guy in a yellow patrol vehicle is on hand to change my fate. The bonnet is quickly opened and he attaches something to the battery terminals. Incredibly, the hopping gods are looking down on me and with one turn (yes, just one turn) of the ignition key the car engine is purring again and I'm back on the road with the colour fast returning to my cheeks. Apparently, the *SatNav* had been on full charge (through the cigar lighter) for several days leaving me without any power. Doh!!

Within an hour or so I'm approaching the ground but miss the turning down Cedar Ridge. Thankfully I spot a few home fans clad in their blue and yellow shirts so I turn back and follow them along the narrow road leading through a smart residential estate. Situated at the end of a cul-de-sac the site is dominated by the large cantilever stand decked out neatly in contrasting blocks of seats sporting the club's colours. The clubhouse is found in a separate building to the left with plenty of picnic seats already taken on the veranda outside as fans bask in the hot sunshine ahead of kick-off. After entering through the turnstile (and programme point) you pass the well-stocked refreshment hut tucked away under the stand to your left. Access to and from the seats is only gained through the back of the stand but if you prefer to stand pitch-side follow the separate paths at either end. Further cover is behind the goal to the left and many of the visiting fans today have already set up base with their Red Army flags and banners proudly hanging on display on the back wall ahead of kick-off. The rest of the ground is open standing along the perimeter path.

Hoppers may be interested to learn that the club initially played on a council pitch in nearby Swillington as there were no facilities available in Garforth. When they joined the West Yorkshire League in 1976, they bought land at Brierlands Lane, a former council rubbish dump, to build a new ground. A clubhouse was built in 1991 and floodlights erected in 1995. In 1998 they moved to the present ground called Wheatley Park. The ground has a capacity of 3,000, of which 278 is seated and 200 covered. The record attendance of 2,428 was set for a Northern Premier League Division One North match against Chester on 29 April 2011.

It's always nice to attend a cup game which features sides playing in different league competitions. The hosts members of the Step 6 NCEL Premier Division currently have made a cracking start to their league programme (albeit after only three games) and currently sit unbeaten in second place (behind Goole AFC). In contrast the Step 5 visitors have yet to win having drawn and lost their opening two matches in the newly formed NPL North West Division. As far as the FA Cup goes Garforth reached this stage after beating Shildon in a replay here ten days ago; for Colne this was their first taste of cup action this season.

You could say today's fixture is a battle of the roses with the teams representing their respective counties from either side of the Pennines. The tie itself is played in baking heat and goes according to the form book with the visitors from Burnley winning comfortably by four goals to nil. Although they lead by a single goal at the break the second and third came within ten minutes of the re-start which give them the upper hand and it is quite surprising that they don't add several more by full-time. The match played on an undulating and bobbly well-grassed surface is played in blistering heat throughout and it is a credit to the officials who wisely punctuate play with several hydration breaks to keep the players cool.

A colour photocopied 24-page programme containing all the essentials is issued priced £1.50 for the game. It is interesting to note in the bullet-pointed club history that the Garforth Miners FC (as they were known) was formed as a pub team (The Miners Arms - hence the colliery wheel on their logo) as recently as 1964. I had almost forgotten that Brazilian legend Socrates also played here back



in 2004. Apparently, it was when the then manager Simon Clifford who had ambitious plans for the club to reach the Football League made a couple of signings with the South American making one appearance and Lee Sharp another high-profile player (ex- Manchester United and Leeds United forward) turning out 21 times and scoring six goals in the same season. Mention is also made to Colne FC and their heroics (as Dynamos) in winning the league and cup double as well as reaching the semi-finals and beating AFC Wimbledon along the way in the 2003-04 season.

Just to add a bit of spice to proceedings the cheery guy on the tannoy announces during the game some of Colne's notable residents which include none other than children's author and broadcaster John Cunliffe (of *Postman Pat* and *Rosie & Jim* fame), Tony Livesey (*BBC 5 Live* presenter) and ex-Burnley FC and Manchester United coach (under Sir Alex Ferguson) Mike Phelan. A crowd in excess of 150 is in attendance including a number of other hoppers and a lovely elderly couple from Colne: the wife a newspaper reporter compiles match notes whilst her other half (also the groundsman) takes the matchday pictures. I am most grateful to both of them for their help in completing the missing bits on my *FGIF* match stats card.

Like all clubs in this competition, details covering Garforth Town are easily accessed through the excellent NCEL website. Regularly updated it's a terrific resource covering a wide range of match stats all neatly arranged for the eager hopper to drool over. As always, I found my trip was a most enjoyable one and would recommend a visit here to all ground collectors. I would also recommend turning your SatNav off properly when you have completed your journey (footballing or otherwise) just in case. The joys of having an AA membership continue. Have fun and stress-free motoring wherever you go to.

**R No.03: WebEd** - Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2019; **Thorpe United** v Sporting Knavesmire; York Football League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2pm; Venue: Thorpe Willoughby Sports Association, Field Lane, Thorpe Willoughby, West Yorks; YO8 9FL; Result: 6-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 13

Over a year ago Thorpe United Football Club won the York Football League Division One title and in doing so successfully gained promotion to the Premier Division of the competition. However, when league officials deemed that their ground and its facilities did not come up to scratch, they had to find an alternative home in order to participate at the higher level. As a result, the club entered into a ground-share agreement with fellow league side and local neighbours Riccall United FC enabling them to play at Landing Lane for a season whilst the necessary ground work was being completed.

With the important alterations now carried out (and ahead of schedule) and the work getting a big thumbs up from the league committee, I'm making my way to the tidy Thorpe Willoughby Sports Association ground to take in the club's first home game after returning to Field Lane. Located only a couple of miles from Selby town centre the club is found by approaching along the A19 (Doncaster Road) and taking a right turn down Barff Lane in the village of Brayton. After about a mile this road joins Field Lane where the sports fields can be seen on the right, just before the road comes to a dead end, alongside the A63 by-pass.

The main entrance (marked with a smart sign) and short driveway open up into a car park which runs parallel to the road. The club founded in 1990 is a non-profit making organisation which acts as a superb sports hub for the local village residents sharing its facilities with football, cricket and indoor social activities in what is a largely rural site bordered by residential housing and open countryside. To the immediate left are two modern brick buildings - one provides players' changing rooms (which now includes female friendly accommodation to meet league requirements) and has a neat club logo above the doorway. The other much smaller adjoining one hosts a smart bar and function room with Sky TV. Behind here is a new floodlit caged 4G area used for activities such as 5-a-side and mini sports. The main football pitch is situated some 200 yards further away on the opposite side of the expansive field. This explains why the players were out warming up close to the changing rooms when I arrived ahead of kick-off.

Today I walked (with the players) around the edge of the cricket field boundary line as a cricket match was already in progress (the final game of the season to be played here, apparently). It was important to keep half an eye on the action as there was the distinct possibility of the ball struck from a wayward cover drive landing close-by, at any time; thankfully we all successfully managed to get there without any incident. The main pitch, shoe-horned into the available space by housing backing onto it at one end and by open fields (with hay bales) bordering two others, has a gentle undulating but well grassed surface. I'm told there's a big overall improvement in the playing area now since concerns were raised over its state a year ago (work to remedy this has been undertaken to meet one of the ground grading stipulations). Like many grounds in this top division, it has a neat post and rail fence around its perimeter to give it a nice fully enclosed feel. This is complemented with an accompanying small seated stand (well, probably an old dug-out!) on the near side and couple of portable perspex dug-outs for the coaching staff and subs on the opposite side close to half-way.

With the Premier Division kicking-off its league programme (for most teams) earlier in midweek (an established tradition in this competition), this naturally provides travellers with further 'hoppertunities to get in some midweek footy action. United got their season underway earning a hard-fought point with a 1-1 draw on their travels to Hemingborough United FC on Wednesday evening.

Today's game saw the visit of York-based side Sporting Knavesmire to the TWSA. With the hosts leading comfortably 3-0 at the break the visitors managed to pull one back and looked to have got back into the game but couldn't convert their chances. United got on top again adding three more goals (two late on) to take all three points and claim second place in the table by the time all the results for the afternoon had been confirmed. Notably the Man-of-the match award went to super striker Paul Moran who bagged himself a hat-trick with goals coming on 7; 83 and 88 minutes. The three officials did a cracking job considering the respective team strips were navy blue and purple! The game played in mostly sunny conditions was attended by a lowly crowd of thirteen spectators including two fortunate female fans (a grandmother with her granddaughter) who had a lucky escape when the dug out they were sitting in just five minutes earlier suddenly took off from the ground when a sudden gust of wind got underneath its frame during the latter

stages of the game. Phew! Owing to the close proximity of housing behind one of the goals it was also interesting to see some of the subs negotiate the high wire mesh fencing in order to retrieve stray balls from neighbouring gardens. Ouch! Programmes are not issued for games here (indeed it is rare to see one in this league) but refreshments are available from the bar area throughout the afternoon.

If you really love your footy stats then check out the York Football League website which is one of the best out there. Apart from all the usual fixture information and club/ground details, there is also a terrific player analysis which updates team line ups and team sheets after each game. It certainly helps to fill in those irritating missed entries and spaces on your *FGIF* Match Stats Card. I really love taking in matches in this league and would encourage all hoppers to do the same. A visit to Thorpe United FC is certainly one I would recommend to all ground collectors out there. I'm pleased they have made a welcome return to the TWSA ground. The joys of hopping in and around *Eboracum* continue. Have fun wherever you get chance to go there for your fix.

**R No.02: WebEd** - Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2019; **East Hull** v North Ferriby; Northern Counties East League Division One; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: Dunswell Park, Dunswell Lane, Hull, East Yorks, HU6 0AA; Result: 0-3; Admission: £5; Programme 24pp, £1.50: Attendance: 321

Up until a couple of months ago nobody in the football world would have anticipated a fixture quite like this. I say this because much has happened on and off the field at both clubs, so here's a bit of background reading covering recent events.

It was back in April this year that an application to change the name of NCEL Division One outfit East Yorkshire Carnegie FC to East Hull FC was approved by the East Riding County FA. At the same time the club announced that chairman Dave Reader present at EYC since promotion from the Humber Premier League would be stepping down from his duties (citing work and family commitments as the reason). His successor was to be Jamie Waltham (the owner of the club's Dunswell Park ground) who was last involved in the NCEL with Hull United FC before co-founding Carnegie. Furthermore, and here's the rub, he was also the former owner of North Ferriby United until its much publicised (in the press and on social media) demise following liquidation.

Waltham along with Carl Chadwick (a former colleague at North Ferriby United FC) have agreed to replace Reader at the helm as the club prepares to play under the East Hull FC banner with a vision of making it one of the largest club's in East Yorkshire. The club has also installed new manager Andrew Watts who has joined from near neighbours and fellow NCEL side Hall Road Rangers FC and starts the season with a completely new squad (indeed only two players remain here from last season). It was also agreed that the club colours be changed to red and black stripes for home games and black and gold, for away - the colours are said to represent the city's rugby league teams as well as the Tigers.

From a North Ferriby FC perspective (and probably with the backing most of non-league football followers) there is still a feeling of great anger and animosity towards those personnel involved in the lamentable events which led their club to being wound up following a court order earlier in March this year. It had been a difficult time for NFU FC up to this point last season. Competing in the Northern Premier League following their relegation from the Conference North, the Villagers had played thirty-three games managing just two wins and four draws to find themselves at the foot of the table, nineteen points adrift of second bottom Workington. The remaining fixtures were cancelled, and the club was wound up owing a sum of £7645.25.

Within a month it was announced that a phoenix club had been formed to be known as North Ferriby FC with financial backing coming from Les Hare who now becomes the new owner and chairman at Grange Lane. After some discussion it was agreed they would enter the football pyramid at Step 6 joining the NCEL First Division for 2019-20. Following the many years of struggle, there is now a renewed optimism amongst the committee, players and fans who feel they have got their club back again. Just take a look at the Villagers website to read about the latest initiatives to promote the club.

With the league fixtures commencing last week, both sides came into today's game on the back of differing fortunes: the hosts experienced a heavy 6-2 defeat on the road at Brigg whilst North Ferriby earned a 1-1 with Hallam at Dransfield Park, notably in front of 495 fans, incidentally the second highest Step 6 attendance of the day in matches played up and down the country. As expected Ferriby, roared on by a large travelling contingent, bossed today's game, a mostly one sided-contest, winning comfortably by a 3-0 score-line with all goals coming from exciting young prospect and debutant Tom Corner (including a penalty to open the scoring). On this form they will be a hard side to beat this coming season. The match played in mostly dull and overcast conditions on a superb playing surface attracted 321 spectators including a number of hoppers - far more than EYC's average of approximately sixty last season - to Dunswell Park. A terrific atmosphere was created by the crowd which included a drummer who was particularly active during the second half of the game. An attractive 24-page glossy colour programme entitled *The Riversiders* (as the club are now referred to) containing plenty of reading material was issued for the game priced £1.50. On arriving at the gate at 2pm, well ahead of kick-off, I was told by the gateman that only twenty copies had been produced and after a semi sprint from the car park was lucky to snap up two (out of the last three) copies when I reached the turnstile. Hot drinks were available from the refreshment kiosk with hot food on offer from a makeshift barbeque next to the players' entrance. During the game several large ice buckets containing chilled cans of lager were taken around the ground by a team of young female helpers. They certainly went down well (literally) by the green and white clad fans congregating in the far corner.

Dunswell Park can be reached by heading north along the A1079 Beverley Road from Hull towards Dunswell. The ground can be found on the immediate right after exiting the large roundabout on Beverley Road as soon as you enter Dunswell and is prior to the petrol station. For travellers using public transport for their journey

(approx. 4 miles) take the EYMS bus numbers 121, 122, 246 from Kingston upon Hull (Interchange, adjacent to station) to Dunswell (Beverley Road, A1174) running four times per hour with a journey time of 20 minutes. Then retrace the route back along Beverley Road where the ground is on your left (5 minutes).

As you follow the main driveway and cross a grassed area, you will see the clubhouse (with function room and bar) immediately to the right. On the left a smaller pitch (used by HPL side LIV supplies FC) with perimeter fence (fashioned from industrial size pipelines) and dug outs runs parallel to the main ground which is fully enclosed by a timber fence. Access in the corner is through a turnstile with plenty of seated cover behind the goal to the right and standing cover along both sides nearest to the entrance. The tree-lined far end is currently out of bounds to spectators. A small tea bar can be found on the far side near to the corner flag. A pair of dug outs are positioned near to the half-way line along the left-hand touchline.

As expected, much remedial work has taken place on the ground over the summer months. Since the name change came into effect, most of the re-branding has been completed to show the club's new logo (in red, black and white) on display at strategic points of the ground. A fresh lick of paint has been made to the stands and perimeter fence - in fact I was warned by several fans as I made my way around the pitch not to touch the metal rail as the paint in some places was still wet but sadly it was too late as some had come off on my shorts!!

And finally. Much had been written in the press about the current status of both clubs prior to the game creating much anticipation and excitement. However, nothing could quite match the publicity surrounding Jamie Waltham's proposal of offering a £5000 first prize in the raffle draw not only for today's match but for every home fixture this season. No. You read it correctly - £5000 first prize in the raffle draw!! In an effort to raise the profile of the new club the chairman who said (and I quote from the matchday programme): 'We will be focussing our efforts on generating a fan base whilst being competitive on the pitch. This is our belief that without a good fan base, there is a limit to everything - and with a large fan base there isn't a limit, so it's where we must concentrate our efforts'. So, as the final whistle sounded and we walked over to the exit, it was announced (over the tannoy) that ticket No.426 had been drawn from a colourful biscuit tin. This was much to the delight of the young guy (an East Hull supporter!?) who was jumping up and down next to me. Totally bemused, he exchanged his winning ticket for a rather tasty cheque from the chairman! The event was quickly met with derision by a small number of departing Ferriby fans (who had already partaken in several cans of lager) who together sang: 'Where's the money gone?' and 'You know it's going to bounce...'. Amid the ensuing melee I quickly made my getaway and joined the queue of cars heading back onto Beverley Road. I can honestly say that it had been a most surreal afternoon and one that will live long in the memory, maybe not for all the right reasons, dare I say it. The highs and lows of hopping certainly continue. Have fun wherever you go!

*edited on 16/08/19*

**R No.01: WebEd - Saturday 3rd August 2019; Barton Town v Yorkshire Amateur; Northern Counties East League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 3pm; Venue: The Easy Buy Stadium, Marsh Lane, Barton upon Humber, North Lincs, DN18 5JD; Result: 0-3; Admission: The Perfect Ten - £10 entry including programme (44pp), food and drink vouchers; Attendance: 121**

There's nothing quite like it, is there? Even after thirty years of football travelling, I still get the same buzz when the first day of a new season comes around once again. I imagine you feel the same. Ever since watching Chelmsford City take on VS Rugby at New Writtle Street on the opening day of the 1989-90 campaign, I still get the same pre-match excitement on what is always a truly memorable day in the ground collector's calendar. With only a few league's starting their games today I decide to stay local and pick a match in the NCEL for my footy fix. So, with camera fully charged and essential *FGIF* Match Stats Card at hand (well, in my camera bag pocket), I set off in eager anticipation from *FGIF* HQ to make the very short journey over the Humber Bridge to Marsh Lane home of Barton Town FC. Apart from newly reformed North Ferriby FC literally on my doorstep this has also got to be one of the nearest Step 5 grounds to home that I have yet to tick off.

Although local club records dating back to the 1880's show competitive football being played in the (then) village, it wasn't until much later that Barton Town Old Boys Football Club was formed in 1995. This came about as a result of a merger between Barton Town (established 1880) and Barton Old Boys (1923), with the new club taking Barton Town's place in the Lincolnshire League. After finishing fourth in their first season, they went on to win the title a year later and then took runners-up spot in both 1997-98 and 1998-99. In 2000 the club decided to switch to the Humber Premier League (but only for one season) before joining the Central Midlands League (Premier Division) in 2001-02. After finishing as runners-up, they were promoted to the Supreme Division in 2002-03 and won the title three years later in 2005-06 before claiming runners-up place the following season. A major ambition was realised when the club gained promotion to the Northern Counties East League Division One in 2007-08 (where they secured a creditable ninth place) and further success came in 2010-11 when Barton finished second earning them promotion up to the Premier Division of the competition. In 2013-14 the club exceeded all expectations by finishing as runners-up behind a strong Brighouse Town side. In 2017, the club was renamed as Barton Town. The club is proud of its achievements and the mission statement made last season was to finish inside the top six. Despite a great start results fell away in the winter and the Swans finished in eleventh.

Barton Town FC originally played on a cricket ground (now a pond at Water's Edge Country Park) which was at the time a few fields north of their present site in Marsh Lane which they took over in 1927. Since that time the ground has been reduced in size and aligned through ninety degrees to give a north south aspect. By contrast Barton Town Old Boys FC played on a ground on Pasture Road up until 1963 before moving to a pitch next to what is the present site of the Humber Bridge Viewing Area. Coast Guard House was used as changing rooms during the side's Scunthorpe and District League days shortly before they were disbanded in 1932. After reforming for a second time they moved to Marsh Lane in 1967 sharing

facilities with Barton Town. Once the clubs merged further ground improvements were made with an extensive redevelopment programme to include floodlights, new access, car parking, changing rooms, clubhouse and stands all necessary to fulfil the club's ambitions to join the NCEL. As the photos in the album gallery show this has now become a tidy Step 5 community ground boasting a superb pitch (having undergone remedial drainage work last year) and terrific spectator facilities both on and off the field.

Visitors to the Easy Buy Stadium (the sponsors are a weekly payment operating company) will discover that this is one of most friendly and proactive clubs in the NCEL. From the moment I arrived I was made to feel very welcome by the hard-working staff who were dressed in their smart corporate sky-blue polo tops. Welfare officer Lynn Green working on the turnstile was on hand to promote the club's *Perfect Ten* special admission offer - it's a terrific deal with entry, matchday programme, £3 food and £3 drinks vouchers redeemable inside the clubhouse all for £10. On top of that I was given a tidy A6-size 40-page BTFC fixture booklet containing a list of the club's fixtures, personnel and details about sponsorship as well as a voucher offering free entry into the ground for any future game! Aaron Irwin the busy media officer outlined some of the future ground developments before kick-off. The work will see the relocation of the main turnstile over to the opposite corner (next to the car park); the creation of a new outside refreshment access point (hatch) for the tea bar and kitchen. Helpful club secretary Kim Mumford (who travels to matches from Hull) explained how grateful the club are for the regular support of local fans and a growing number of sponsors - check out the impressive range of advertisers displayed around the ground and printed in the programme. Look out too for the Swans Forever Wall next to the turnstile.

Today's opening league game saw the visit of the well-respected Leeds-based outfit Yorkshire Amateur FC to Marsh Lane. Early errors proved costly as the relatively young and naïve Barton side soon found themselves 2-0 down within the first ten minutes. Despite a valiant fight back by manager Dave Ricardo's boys after the break, it was the Ammers who put the result beyond doubt when they added a third against the run of play midway through the half. Notably the NCEL's leading scorer from last season Ashley Flynn (who bagged over forty goals in all competition) was on hand scoring two of the goals (on 7 and 78 minutes) to get his season off the mark. For the record Fernando Moke scored the opener inside the first two minutes. The game played on a flat, well-manicured surface in mostly sunny conditions was attended by over one hundred spectators. A superb full colour 44-page programme printed on glossy paper was issued for the game and contained all the usual items including a wonderful tongue-in-cheek *Fans Focus* column. This week features a chap called Ben, an avid Swans' fan and lifelong Grimsby Town FC supporter who says his favourite biscuit is a chocolate digestive which he likes to dunk in his tea. A man after my own heart. Who said the future of programme production looks grim? A wide range of hot and cold food was available from a well-stocked tea bar throughout the afternoon and cheerfully dispensed by personable mother and son combo Sophie and Harry.

It goes without saying that a visit to Marsh Lane home of Barton Town FC comes heartily recommended to all travellers who will enjoy their short stay at this friendly, well-run club. More details covering the Swans can be found on the excellent NCEL web pages and the club's new website and regularly updated *twitter* feed. I will make a re-visit later in the campaign that's for sure. What a great way to start a new season - the joys of hopping for another campaign have returned. Have fun wherever you go during your travels in 2019-20!

*edited on 15/08/19*