

TT No.102: 01/05/05 Club/Ground Focus: *Mike Latham* - Castleton Gabriels (NWCL2)

Sat 30 Apr 2005, NWCLD2, Castleton Gabriels 0-4 Blackpool Mechanics (att.- 35)

Castleton Gabriels played what could be their final game in the NWCL as their season closed in familiar defeat- rock bottom of division 2 and with 111 goals conceded in 36 games it has been a miserable season on the pitch. In a typical end of season game they had no answer to the finishing of Mechanics' striker Wayne Gardner who completed a hat-trick late in the game, though it may well have been a different story had the home side capitalised on a number of clear-cut chances in the first half.

Gabriels face relegation because they have been unable to comply with a league ruling that all clubs have to have working floodlights for 2005/06. The floodlight pylons are up but a club official explained that they had been searching for missing parts as their lights are of an old design. They have finally located the parts in Ipswich but not before the league deadline and are appealing against the decision in order to give them more time. If not they will enter the Manchester League.

Castleton is situated just outside Rochdale and the ground, reached at the end of a long residential street, has a pleasant rural feel with a moorland on two sides and distant hills making for a most pleasant backdrop. The ground, floodlights excepted, is one of the best in the league in the writer's opinion with cover on three sides and an impressive main stand that gives a fine view of the action. There are a number of seats on the far side and one end is covered as well. There is an excellent club house with one of the best menus around- the pie and peas come heartily recommended- and the club produced a 52-page programme incorporating the league newsletter for £1 with admission only £3. The club are clearly dependent on a small number of hard- working volunteers and a friendly welcome is given to travellers. The playing pitch was well grassed though undulating and had a marked slope. Originally formed as a Sunday school side in 1924 St Gabriels moved to its present Butterworth Park home in 1979 and entered the NWCL in 1990, playing their 500th NWCL game in August 2004.