

TT No.015: 26/01/05 Club/Ground Focus: *Mike Latham* - Stranraer (Scottish Football League)

Stair Park, Stranraer is one of soccer's outposts, situated on the far south west tip of mainland Scotland closer to many places in Ireland than in Scotland. Belfast is actually nearer than Glasgow, for instance. The town is about 100 miles from Carlisle on a road that is winding and slow in places, particularly if full of lorries heading for the ports at Stranraer and Cairnryan.

But the journey is worthwhile when you reach Stair Park, situated in a public park close to the town centre. The ground was bequeathed by the Earl of Stair to Wigtown District Council in 1907 and if alive today he would be delighted with the smart upkeep and appearance of the stadium. A modern cantilever stand, opened in 1997 and holding around 1,500, dominates the ground. On the other side is a small stand with terracing either side. Behind the goals at the west side of the ground is a small covered terrace with an open end, partly grassed, to the east.

On a cold but dry evening Ayr United, who brought with them about half of the 1,002 crowd, moved into the last 16 of the Scottish FA Cup with a 2-0 victory after a hard-fought game. Admission was £10 to the stands and £8 terracing with concessions £5 and £4 respectively and a 24-page programme sold for £1. There is plenty of free parking next to the ground. Stranraer are still run by a committee and a club official explained that most of the players are from the Glasgow and Ayrshire regions with only three local players in the first team squad. There was a well-stocked club shop under the main stand and plenty of refreshment areas inside the ground but unlike most lower league Scottish grounds there was no free movement to different parts of the ground once inside and the away fans were segregated in the north stand and east terrace. Stranraer is a friendly club in pleasant surroundings and well worth a visit.