

TT No.047: 09/03/05 Ground/Club Focus: *Mike Latham* - Bamber Bridge (Unibond League Prem)

Tues 8 March 2005, Unibond Premier Division - Bamber Bridge 1-2 Farsley Celtic (attendance: 80)

Irongate is the home of Bamber Bridge FC, situated just minutes from the M6 and end of the M65 and located off the A6 London Road flyover into Preston. Bamber Bridge is a small mostly residential village that has expanded in recent years and the football club is to be found at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac.

A splendid club house is situated behind the goal and fronts directly onto the terrace behind the goal. Very comfortably appointed and manned by pleasant staff, it served three real ales. The clubhouse also includes a refreshment bar and club shop.

Bamber Bridge, who played in the Preston & District League until a rapid rise through the pyramid after moving to Irongate in 1987, are currently struggling to match their glory days of 1995/96 when they won the NPL Premier division but were denied a Conference place due to ground grading requirements.

On a dry evening the counterattractions of live television conspired to keep the attendance down to only 80. A technically superior Farsley Celtic side, with a number of experienced ex-Football League professionals in their ranks, cruised into a 2-0 lead but were left hanging on as Brig staged a late revival. Farsley moved up to second place in the Unibond Premier as a result but Brig were left to reflect on a sixth successive league defeat.

Irongate boasts an excellent main stand, built in 1997 that affords an excellent elevated view over the playing area. The other side is open standing and houses the dug-outs. To the right of the main stand is a small covered end with a small covered stand to the left of the clubhouse to the left of the main stand.

The ground must be one of the most used of all with Preston North End Reserves staging matches there. Irongate is also home to a junior and ladies' team and is a regular host of local league and schools finals.

Admission was £6 adults and a superb 48-page programme sold for £1.50. Irongate is a very pleasant and friendly place to watch football and it is a shame to see such a splendid local amenity currently struggling at the gates for support from local people. A visit there is highly recommended.