

TT No.058: 25/03/05 Ground/Ground Focus: *Mike Latham* - Bacup Borough (NWCL1)

NWCL Div1 Bacup Borough 1-1 Maine Road - 24 Mar2005 (attendance - 71)

There's a quaint ritual you can perform each time you enter the turnstiles at Bacup Borough. Ask the elderly gentleman on the gate: "Are there any programmes?" and he'll reply: "No, there's been a fire at the printers." Never fails.

Nice to see some things remain the same in a rapidly changing world and, the ritual over and £5 expended (£3 concessions), it was time to concentrate on the action.

Bacup have earned a fair amount of media spotlight by their acquisition of several ex-Football League stars, notably David May once a European Cup winner with Manchester United.

May was unavailable for the game with Maine Road but Bacup still had Ben Thornley (ex-Manchester United and Aberdeen) and former Welsh international goalkeeper Dave Felgate, now 45, in their ranks. Felgate is perhaps best remembered for his stunning performance in the FA Cup for Leigh RMI at Fulham a few years ago, described by then Fulham manager Kevin Keegan as "the best goalkeeping performance I've ever seen." Ian Hughes and Lee Anderson, both with FL experience, were also in the Borough ranks.

Bacup's West View ground, located up Cowtoot Lane is situated on a hill just off the Burnley Road leading out of the East Lancashire town. The approach is steep and the surrounding area is dominated by old stone terraced houses and corner shops. For an afternoon game the views are stunning.

Stone walls surround the modest ground which is an atmospheric place with a sloping pitch with a six-foot drop from one corner flag to the opposite corner. There is a club house behind the goals at the Cowtoot Lane end where the turnstiles are located and an excellent tea bar serving delicious Hollands pies and manned by friendly staff. A small four-row seated stand is located in this corner between the corner flag and the halfway line and two of the ends are modestly covered.

Borough manager Brent Peters is the man with the silver tongue who attracts so many famous faces to West View and is credited with almost single-handedly keeping the club afloat.

Borough fell behind to an isolated Maine Road attack, the visitors' striker Gareth Richards netting from a rebound off the upright but Thornley's 30-yard free-kick deflected off a defender to earn a share of the spoils. There was plenty of good football played on a mild evening with the hint of rain in the air, Thornley looking

a class apart, and a superb late save by Maine Road 'keeper Greg Hall ensured his side a point from an entertaining game.

For a taste of real Lancashire, a visit to Bacup Borough is highly recommended though the absence of programmes is a big disappointment and surely cannot be condoned by the league.

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