

TT No.089: 19/04/05 Ground/Club Focus: *Mike Latham* - Harrogate Railway Athletic (NCELP)

Mon 18 Apr 2005; NCEL League Cup Semi-Final; Harrogate Railway Athletic 1-0 Hallam (att. - 170)

Harrogate Railway achieved national fame during their FA Cup run two seasons ago with their home tie against Bristol City attracting the glare of national television and a record attendance of 3,500.

There was a much more modest turn-out for this semi-final, around 170 (based on a head count) lining the ground just after kick-off on a dry but chilly evening.

Station View is actually situated in the village of Starbeck about a mile-and-a-half from Harrogate town centre on the Knaresborough Road. There is a club house and car park and another playing pitch before the main ground is reached. Admission was £4 and the programme was £1. A feature of the ground was the "station buffet" which served a good selection of drinks and snacks, a delicious steak pie being procured for a bargain 70p.

The ground is rather basic being uncovered hard standing on three sides and a small covered standing and seated area (with 800 seats) behind the far goal. A number of porta-cabins along the side of the field housed the PA box and boardroom.

The home club had actually played ten successive away games before beating Armthorpe Welfare at Station View two days previously and face two more away trips to complete their season, still in with a chance of the championship. The programme was bang-up-to-date and was a good 32-page offering that showed the club to be progressive with a fund-raising initiative underway to redevelop the ground and facilities at Station View.

Heavy rain had made the sloping pitch wet but it appeared well drained and a hard-fought game ensued, the home side qualifying the final by virtue of a last-minute headed goal by substitute Graham Marchant.

Hallam had a player dismissed for two yellow cards on the hour-mark, his second offence being a blatant and unnecessary hand ball and the referee had his hands full keeping the lid on the game with some bad fouls flying about. But the officials did nothing to curb the terrible bad language of the players which remains a blight on the non-league scene, especially if taking young children to the game. Why do so many players feel it necessary to shout: "F*** off!" every time they make a bad pass? Sadly, there were plenty of misplaced passes in a tedious encounter lacking in skill.

There was also an extraordinary verbal exchange between a home defender and his bench conducted in full hearing of the spectators. The same player later replied to

some good-natured barracking by a visiting supporter with some choice remarks and obscene hand gestures that should have warranted punishment from the officials.

Off the field the club is a friendly one with a number of hard-working officials- the club was formed in 1935 and has played since then on the railway ground and has carried on though the railway works closed in 1959. Though hardly picturesque it is a ground full of character and clearly the focus for the local community with a number of junior teams playing there.

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