

TT No.096: 27/04/05 Ground/Club Focus: *Mike Latham* - Ashton Town (NWCL2)

Tues 26 Apr 2005, NWCL2; Ashton Town 4-1 New Mills (att-50)

This was a landmark game in the history of Ashton Town - originally formed in 1953 as Makerfield Mill FC. With floodlights due to be installed at their Edge Green Street home in the next few weeks to satisfy membership criteria

of the NWCL for next season it marked the end of the 6-15 midweek kick-off. I must admit I will miss them in a funny sort of way. Programme editor Ian Templeman must be congratulated for the splendid 32-page publication (£1) he produced for this game.

Ashton Town have been members of the NWCL since its inception in 1982 apart from one season in the Manchester League. Situated just off the Golborne Road from the town of Ashton-in-Makerfield south of Wigan, the ground is to be found off a pleasant residential road and is surrounded by houses. Unlike experiences elsewhere those same residents fully supported the club's application to install lights, preferring for the club to stay where it is than the site be developed by property developers.

A well-kept playing pitch is the first thing you notice on entry, as well as a warm welcome from club officials. There is a small club house behind the goals at the top end, a changing room block down one side and a small seated stand and cover on the opposite side.

With visitors New Mills arriving in dribs and drabs the game only kicked-off at 6.55pm and referee S Parker shrewdly kept the halftime interval to a minimum in order to finish the game in the light. New Mills took an early lead but a splendid header by Neil Parkinson levelled the scores just before halftime and Ashton went on to record a convincing victory with three second half goals to leapfrog their opponents in the table. They were indebted, though, to some fine saves by 'keeper Danny Vickers.

There was an amazing on-pitch altercation at the break between the visitors' coaching staff and captain leading to the latter walking off the field and being replaced by a second half substitute. No such problems for Ashton who looked a cheerful and well organised team and with the rare inclusion of identical twins in Paul and Karl Atherton.

In general, the game was played in a good spirit and was officiated extremely well. With most of the players having rushed to the ground from work or about to rush from work to begin a night shift the entertainment on offer was excellent value for the £2 admission price.

Ashton Town have now won their last four games but pity the poor press officer - Saturday's game against Nelson will be the eighth home game in five weeks and he

started the season with four home games in a fortnight. In between he had only eight home games in seven months for which to prepare a programme. Great entertainment, a friendly welcome and a pleasant ground- highly recommended.

03/20