

Fans revel in away day trip into history



We love you Wycombe, we do: Eleven-year-old Andrew Hughes (centre) and his friends cheer on Blues at Brunton Park

AT 7.24am the Watford Junction train station car park was almost bare. A ticket attendant kicked up his heels outside his kiosk — the Saturday shopping morning rush still an hour or so away.

By 7.26 a lengthy queue snaked the 150 yards back to the main road — the invasion was early.

Similarly, platform eight transformed rapidly from early-morning tranquillity to a humming hubbub of 75 people on a trip into history. But it didn't feel like it at the time. Sleep was still being wiped from the eyes.

A four-hour 300-mile journey lay a head to a northern outpost — as yet uncharted territory for Wycombe Wanderers' devout supporters.

But once the 7.56 was on its way, British Rail coffees quaffed, and hot bacon and

CLAIRE NASH joined Wanderers supporters on a 600-mile rail trip to witness Blues' League debut

tomato rolls scoffed, the eyes were brighter and the chat earnestly centred on the task ahead.

At Carlisle: "Difficult to say....could go either way.....hope they win."

The Division Three championship: "They'll do well to get into the play-offs.....the bookies' odds are ridiculous."

A speedy exodus to one of Carlisle's finest hostels ensued when the train drew into the town's picturesque station.

The lunch-time trip was merely a time-filler. By 3pm the Carlisle Express 75 had found their marks and their cue when referee George Cain blew the whistle on Wan-

derers' 109 years of non-League football: in what is hoped to be a permanent arrangement.

They joined around 1,900 fellow long-distant travellers in raucously whooping at the fact from their intimately-crammed corner of Brunton Park.

Their emotions see-sawed throughout the 90 minutes of frantic action: fear (Blues' shaky opening), disappointment (the hosts' opening goal), sneaking assurance (Wycombe increasing pressure at the other end), joyful relief (Wanderers' equaliser), ecstasy (Steve Guppy's potential winner), ohh noooo (Carlisle's equaliser).

Back on the 6.18, an air of satisfaction lingered that Wycombe had made, and earned a point, although it could have been three.

Time to relax? "How're you getting to Leyton Orient.....bookings need to be in or Wigan by Thursday...."