

TT No.242: Dean McClean - Cumbrian Travels - Cleator Moor; Windscale and Whitehaven Amateurs (all Wearside League)

Saturday 6th May 2006. Wearside League: **Cleator Moor Celtic** 8-0 Annfield Plain. Admission: by donation; no programme; att.: 70est; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

The opportunity to “tick off” three grounds in close proximity at an isolated location does not come along too often, so the decision to visit this mini un-official “hop” was made as soon as we knew about it.

First on the list was a visit to Cleator Moor Celtic. The ground was smoothly reached in around two and a half hours from deepest Lancashire. The wonderful Cumbrian scenery and superb weather meant for a pleasant journey on a warm, sunny morning.

The home secretary confirmed that the match would kick-off depending upon Annfield Plain’s arrival time. Thankfully all went smoothly and we kicked only a little time after 12-30pm, thus allowing enough time to reach the second match. Unfortunately, no programmes were issued for any of the games and on phoning a fellow traveller, who was on his way to Cumbria, about the situation at Cleator Moor he promptly turned his car around and attended another match that afternoon. A rather draconian attitude to have in my view, for a programme is treated as a merely bonus in my opinion. Perhaps, the only niggle of the day was that officials at each club didn’t have the foresight to organise things better in terms of programmes etc.

If the clubs could have produced even a minimal programme and organised some form of hot food, then I am sure that the travellers present (around 30) would have lined each clubs’ respective pockets. Opportunity missed.

Cleator Moor Celtic are a friendly, well run club with aspirations to play at a higher level. The whole squad come from the village, which is a truly remarkable achievement. The club boasts a wonderful club house, which was paid for by lottery money. Complimentary tea and coffee were served inside. The coffee was to be savoured too.

An excellent, if rather one sided, game ensued, as the home side dominated virtually the whole match, smashing in eight goals without replay. The tempo at which the home team played through-out was excellent. Considering the heat and the fact that the match was won by half time, Celtic deserve credit for their effort.

Saturday 6th May 2006. Wearside League: **Windscale** 3-1 Boldon Community Association. Admission: by donation; no programme; att.: 50est; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

The Falcon Ground, home of Windscale, in Egremont was swiftly reached from Cleator Moor just as the two teams were entering the field of play - now that's what I call timing.

This venue is the home of not only the Football Club but there is also a Rugby pitch, Cricket pitch and unusually an archery pitch! A good-sized social club was positioned near the entrance to the ground. The ground is fully railed off with floodlights, although no hard standing or covered accommodation were available.

An excellent match took place on a near perfect surface, with Boldon the dominant team in the first and Windscale the second, this match was truly worthy of the cliché: "a game of two halves". As with the first game, the effort was excellent, in warm sunshine with no end of season feel to this match.

Saturday May 6th 2006. Wearside League: **Whitehaven Amateurs** 7-1 Annfield Plain. Admission: by donation; no programme; Att.: 75est; FGIF Match Rating 4*.

After arriving at the County Ground with some difficulty, our driver decided he wanted to take a de-tour via the local Morrisons car park. Surely the last place any sane person wants to be stuck on a Saturday afternoon. Local shoppers eventually negotiated, we arrived in good time for the kick-off of 5-00pm.

The County Ground, Whitehaven is not only home to a football team it is also home to a Rugby League team of the same name, who ply their trade in National League One. The Whitehaven Recreation ground was as its name suggests originally the playing fields for the local coal miners dating back to Victorian times. It was an enclosed field with one wooden stand opened in 1933. Over the years the Recreation Ground hosted both rugby and professional football games.

The Recreation Ground in its current form was built in 1948 to enable the newly formed Professional Rugby League club to play in the Rugby Football league. The ground now has terracing on 3 sides with one end of ground (Kell's end) covered. The old wooden grandstand was demolished in 1995 and new modern construction, the B&H Stand seating 556 was built to replace it. The current ground capacity is 7,500 while the record attendance was in March 1960 18,500 against Wakefield Trinity.

The football ground is a rather more basic venue, with no covered accommodation to shelter from the elements if need be. Behind the bottom goal is a club house. Ample car parking was available on a smart new tarmac surface.

Whitehaven did make an application to join the Northern League for next season. It is certainly easy to see why the application was rejected. I can't speak for everybody but this certainly was the first occasion I have ever seen one team play two matches on the same day. I do know of a team sending two teams to two different, venues on the same evening. Having already played today it is not ideal to be playing a team that can still win the championship. With this in mind the majority of "hoppers" were predicting an annihilation. Predictions of 9-0, 10-0 and more were muttered. Although Annfield Plain were well beaten the score-line was perhaps a little harsh with Whitehaven scoring three late goals.

An excellent day out all round was enjoyed by many. 3 new grounds, 20 goals and great weather, thankfully.

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