

**TT No.245: Mike Latham** - Thurs 11 May 2006: Westmorland League Div. One: **Sedbergh Wanderers** 3-1 Greystoke. Att: 40 h/c; Admission: free; 8pp programme (special one-off edition courtesy of Len Spierenberg) £1; FGIF Rating: 3\*.

Andy Sneddon's posting on the *Football Traveller's* message board that Len Spierenberg was producing a programme for this game persuaded three travellers from Lancashire to dip their toes into the Westmorland League for the first time. The league is blessed with an excellent, if somewhat basic, website that is updated regularly with fixtures, results and league tables and the idyllic location of many of the grounds, especially at this time of year, makes a visit to one of the league members a tempting prospect.

As a debut this was a good one to choose. Sedbergh is a beautiful small market town, surrounded by stunning scenery and is in the beginning of a four-year project to make it England's Book Town, which will hopefully regenerate the centre. Sedbergh School, whose famous alumni include the former England rugby union captain Will Carling, dominates the town and its beautiful cricket ground will stage a Cumberland Minor Counties fixture in June. With several decent pubs and restaurants, and just a few minutes' drive from J37 of the M6 the relaxing ambience of the town on a beautiful early summer's evening made for a pleasant pre-match hour, the highlight of which was an excellent pint of Jennings Cumberland Ale.

Upon arriving at the Havera Playing Field, located just a short walk from the centre and dominated by a towering mountain in the near distance, there was initial alarm as no posts were erected on the football field. But within a few minutes the alarm was over as club officials arrived to erect the posts with nets and the players from both teams began to assemble. Then the great man himself, Mr Spierenberg made himself known, brandishing copies of his excellent eight-page programme, including league tables, results and the two line-ups- a splendid effort that certainly made the day for one of my travelling companions whose over-riding need for a programme has been well chronicled on these pages.

The teams changed in the local village hall and a crowd of around 40 lined the boundaries of the flat and well grassed pitch in eager anticipation of the game. There were no refreshment facilities and the pitch, was not even roped-off. Local children playing nearby continually kicking balls or throwing frisbees onto the playing area while one of the players engaged in a long conversation with a lady one assumed was his wife about her shopping expedition that afternoon. Sedbergh needed at least a point, so the programme told us, to ensure they escaped from relegation- and with three wins from their last four games were clearly in good form. Their opponents, Greystoke, were just two points to the good.

The game kicked-off on time at 6-45pm with club officials, one from each side, helping with the linesman's duties, one donning a bobble hat on one of the

warmest evenings of the year so far. The standard of play was not wonderful but was sufficiently competitive to hold the interest and, one member of the group, of around a dozen travellers present, with far more experience of this league, explained that the top clubs such as Wetheriggs United and Kendal County produced football of a far higher quality than this.

Though Greystoke took an early lead with a header from their striker with one of the more interesting coiffures on the circuit Sedbergh were not to be denied. They equalised before half-time and ensured their top-flight status for another season with a second half brace from their impressive number nine Michael Harrison, who looked a cut above anyone else on view. The game was generally played in a good spirit and the stunning scenery made this one of the pleasantest of occasions and would make a strong case for another visit to a Westmorland League game, particularly at this time of year and in this weather.

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