

TT No.253: *Dean McClean* - Tues 16th May 2006. Northern Alliance Challenge Cup Final: Venue: **Haydon Bridge Utd FC**. Carlisle City 2-2 Team Northumbria (AET- Carlisle City won 4-3 on penalties). Admission: £2; Programme: 4pp, 50p; Att: 100est; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

After my fellow traveller and I dipped our toes into the murky world of the Westmorland league Thursday last we decided to make our debut in another league; The Northern Alliance.

The choosing of Haydon Bridge to host the prestigious Challenge Cup Final probably owed more to its geographical location rather than its facilities. Arriving in Haydon Bridge the town is straddled by the main A69 Carlisle-Newcastle route and is split by the South Tyne River. To reach the ground simply cross the river (from Carlisle) and take the 1st left and the ground car park is at the end of that road, after you've crossed the river once more.

Haydon Bridge is a small market town in West Northumberland where there has been a settlement since Saxon times and the name Haydon is known to mean enclosure. The bridge that crosses the Tyne was built in 1773 to replace the previous one which was destroyed by flooding two years earlier. The town has connections with the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 for James and Charles, Viscounts Langley and Earls of Derwent water who resided at Langley Castle, took part in the up-rising and were be-headed for treason at Tower Hill in London. Today the town is of a far more gentile nature and is on the most part visited by tourists wishing to visit Hadrian's Wall, which is 2 miles North of the town.

The ground was easily reached in around two and a half hours from home, allowing for some superb sustenance to be had at Marks and Spencer on Southwaite Services. Highly recommended. The ground is a rather basic yet charming venue which is sandwiched between the A69 and the River Tyne. Superb views of the rolling Northumberland hills were enjoyed. No covered accommodation was available, so thankfully the ominous looking black clouds above failed to pour rain on our person. Upon entering the ground, the main building incorporating both dressing rooms and kitchen are on the right-hand side, where tea and coffee was cheerily dispensed.

With my fellow programme enthusiast less than satisfied at the rudimentary four-page effort he was rather dubious of the playing standard we were about to witness. Another travelling companion was offered a lift to this prestigious event but he point-blank refused; for he will only visit a new ground if the home team are in attendance! Team Northumbria have just secured the League title and are heading for the Northern League next season, while Carlisle finished a respectable 3rd so this promised to be a tight affair. The game was truly superb as both teams tried and succeeded to play neat, passing football on an excellent pitch and each citadel was vehemently defended by the respective rear guard. The game was also

played in a great spirit through-out, with tackles hard but fair. After 120 minutes the two teams could not be separated and penalties were to decide this enthralling contest. It was Carlisle who held their nerve, scoring all four of their penalties with the students missing two. After the match a presentation was made to both teams.

Any travellers who missed this superb match have another chance to redeem themselves on Monday when the two teams will do battle again at the same venue. This time it's the League Cup Final at stake. And if that's not enough the teams do battle again in the League on Thurs May 25th at Team Northumbria. Highly Recommended.

04/20