

TT No.257: Dean McClean - Tuesday 23rd May 2006. Westmorland League: **Ambleside** 3-5 Kendal County. Admission: free; no programme; att.: 30est; FGIF Match Rating: 2*.

With my learned traveller's obsession of attempting to attend 200 games in a season (a mere feat he has yet to achieve) starting to border on the compulsive, I was once more dragged well below my usual desired level of football; the end of season dregs that is the Westmorland League. For a groundhopper of his stature I'm amazed he has yet to achieve this mere feat. Having to attend a fixture producing no programme and (shamefully) involving a reserve team is surely as low as it can get. A feat achieved at Windermere Thursday last.

After phoning Ambleside secretary Mr Bland on numerous occasions to confirm the go-ahead of the game and to ask for some simple directions to the ground we were left frustrated as his phone appeared to be un-manned. Upon approaching the ground, we were less than confident of a match taking place, as there was little sign of any football related activity. But thankfully all was well and our spirits were raised by the sight of Kendal Co. players "warming-up". We had somehow entered the ground via the local park rather than the normal entrance. It's been a long season for some of us...

Hillard Park, home of already relegated Ambleside is an idyllic, if basic, venue dominated by towering mountains all around. As you enter the ground you are greeted by the building which incorporates the changing facilities and kitchen. Gasping for a drink, four keen travellers were disappointed as the facility seemed to have been abandoned for some time. One of our brethren, who attempted to "brew-up" was greeted by a mouldy fridge!

Kendal County, runners-up spot in the Westmorland League, were presented with their medals by two League Committee men prior to engagement of the two teams. Upon summoning the teams to the pitch, the referee was overheard stating the fact that he was only intending on playing forty minutes each way. Completely absurd in my opinion as there was enough light to permit an HOUR each way; the League Committee in attendance obviously having no bearing on this official's strange decision to shorten our enjoyment. Match officials in the Westmorland League are a law unto themselves one assumes.

From the outside eight goals may seem like royal entertainment but quite frankly the standard of both teams was quite simply appalling, with skill levels at a premium. As the goals flowed in one after another the playing standard was endured. A fellow groundhopper from Blackpool was so caught up in the excitement he had mistakenly entered a disallowed goal into his notebook. A sign of traveller fatigue? Or maybe an attempt to count a goal that wasn't? Only he will know!

At least we all arrived home ten minutes earlier than we expected.

