

TT No.44: Mike Latham - Tuesday 4 September 2007: Westmorland Football League Division One: **Carvetii United** 1-0 Appleby. Att: 40 (h/c); Admission: no charge; No programme; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

Imagine this happening higher up the pyramid- a check 'phone call to the home secretary to confirm the fixture the evening before; he is not in so his son gives me the manager's number. A charming fellow, the manager not only confirms the game is on but gives directions and a brief history of the club.

I had always assumed that Carvetii United, based in the Cumbrian market town of Kirkby Stephen in what used to be Westmorland was the name derived from a local firm. But this is not the case. "We are based in Kirkby Stephen and Brough and our second team play at Coltsford Common in Brough," Mr Metcalfe, the manager informed. "So, we wanted a name for both towns and Carvetii goes back to Roman times and was the name for the people of this area."

After gaining promotion to the first division last season Carvetii earned their first win of the season the previous Saturday, against Ibis. "But this will be a hard game and a real local derby," the manager added. "Appleby is only ten miles away and they are a good side."

Appetite whetted I headed off J38 of the M6 towards my destination. Parrot Park is located on the Hartley Road, the last turning right by a mini roundabout out of town heading towards Brough. Go past the saw-mill, over the bridge and the ground is on your left. There is ample parking, a small changing pavilion and two good-sized, well maintained pitches. Carvetii use the far one, bordered on three sides by hedges and with stunning views over steep rising hills, bathed in late summer sunshine.

I had seen Appleby late last season and been impressed. Their manager, Jock, is well respected in the league for producing good quality footballing sides. But on this occasion Appleby got off to a sluggish start and might have been several goals down before finding their feet. A competitive game looked likely to be settled by the odd goal- that duly came to the home team just before half-time after a well-worked move.

An Appleby forward was sent-off for a stamping offence early in the second half and the game deteriorated as a spectacle. The visitors actually played more fluently with ten men and twice the woodwork denied them a deserved share of the spoils.

A crowd of around 40 had built up by kick-off time and on a pleasant evening this was a thoroughly entertaining evening. No attempt was made to take a gate or a raffle and, as is commonplace in this league, there were no programmes on sale. But the majesty of the setting and the warmth of the welcome of the locals in an interesting small market town more than made up for that.

