

**TT No. 154: Mike Latham** - Sat 21 February 2009: West Lancashire League Division 2. **GSK Ulverston Rangers** 0-1 Todmorden Borough. Att: 10 (H/c); No admission or programme; FGIF Match Rating: 2\*.

What should have been a relaxing day out on the south west Cumbrian coast turned out to be something of a nightmare and all because I didn't follow the groundhopper's first rule- always check the game is on and the kick-off time with the home secretary.

I had intended to go to the game at Millom and as the West Lancashire League reverts to 3pm kick-offs from February and as the day was fine, I didn't bother to check the fixture. One mile or so away from Millom there was a tasty cup-tie in the Furness Premier League involving Haverigg United and Barrow Island with a 2pm kick-off so the plan was to catch the first half there and then wander along to Millom for the game.

So far so good, Haverigg's ground at Wilson Park, an immaculately kept pitch with stunning views across the distant fells was easy to locate. The ground is part of the impressive Millom rugby union club complex and very close to the beach.

I was the only spectator and the referee had failed to put in an appearance so things were looking dodgy for a while. But one of the home officials donned a luminous top and took the whistle. It was a good game, played in excellent spirit and I was rather loath to tear myself away but had been looking forward to visiting Millom for some time.

Millom's ground also adjoins a rugby club, this one the Millom ARL complex down Devonshire Road. A large crowd - at least 200 or so- had turned up to watch the rugby team play Eastmoor. I went behind the club house to the football pitch that runs at right-angles to the rugby field. To my dismay the referee was just blowing up for half-time. The kick-off had apparently been brought forward to 2pm due to a function in the club.

With the score already 2-2 I didn't feel like staying to watch half a game and quickly had to make for Plan B. This involved a journey of about 15 miles to Ulverston where the home team were playing Todmorden Borough in West Lancashire League Division Two.

GSK Ulverston Rangers, to give the team its full title, play at the impressive sports ground attached to the large chemical factory, owned by GlaxoSmithKline. The factory site is located down North Lonsdale Road about one mile from the centre of town and close to where the Ulverston Canal meets the sea.

It's a pleasant location to watch football, the main pitch has grass banking on three sides that afford an elevated view of play and the well-appointed social club was open for business.

Only a handful of spectators had gathered to watch the game and one of them, a visiting spectator from Todmorden, kindly filled me in on the first 20 minutes action that I had missed. Fortunately, the score-line was still blank.

Despite near perfect conditions for football the game was of a poor quality and was decided by a rare shaft of quality ten minutes into the second half, the visiting striker Brown meeting an angled left-wing cross perfectly to send a header into the top corner.

Millom will have to wait for another day - and next time whatever the weather I shall be ringing up to check the kick-off time and prospects for play. We all learn from our experiences and though the day was rescued somewhat I certainly learned a valuable lesson.

06/20