

**TT No.162: *Andy Gallon*** - Sat February 28th 2009; **New Marske SC** v Jarrow; Wearside League; Res: 3-0; Att: 45 (h/c); Admission: £1 (incl. 4pp programme); FGIF Match Rating: \*\*\*.

If you're travelling all the way to New Marske - and it's a fair trek from most places - be sure to go the extra mile and visit Saltburn-by-the-Sea. Parts of this former resort, which developed and prospered in Victorian times with the coming of the railway to a windswept corner of the Yorkshire coast, have been preserved as if set in aspic. Two magnificent artefacts, a pier and a funicular, relics of a bygone age, dominate the bracing seafront. The wrought iron and wood pier, alongside which used to dock paddle steamers linking Hartlepool with Scarborough and Bridlington, has lost a third of its original 1,500-foot length owing to storms and shipwrecks since its construction in 1869. But what remains was lovingly restored during the 1990s, and provides a grandstand view of monstrous tankers bound to and from Teesport, and hardy surfboarders braving icy breakers. The funicular, the oldest operational example surviving in Great Britain, makes light the burden of scaling the crumbling cliffs which separate the seafront from the town centre. Opened in 1884, this inclined tramway, incorporating an ingenious system of counter-balancing water tanks, was the brainchild of John Anderson, a former engineer on the Stockton & Darlington Railway, and one of the prime movers behind Saltburn's growth. The town is now at the end of an insignificant branch railway line, whose last few chains have been removed to allow the attractive station buildings and adjacent hotel to be sold to retailers and developers. Railway puns abound in the names of the businesses which now occupy the site of what must once have been a bustling scene of steam-powered trains disgorging hundreds of excited holidaymakers and trippers. It does not take much imagination to picture the past. Two hundred yards up the track bed, bus shelters are dotted about on bare platforms, the replacement station used by shoppers heading for retail therapy in Middlesbrough's arcades. So much for progress, eh?

Gurney Street, the semi-rural home of New Marske Sports Club, is - almost inevitably - a disappointment after such delights. Set on the edge of an overspill housing estate for Marske-by-the-Sea dominated by bungalows, half a mile from the beach, this is a relatively undeveloped ground. There is neither cover nor floodlights, though the club, who did the Wearside League treble last season and run junior teams for players under eight to under 18, are looking to install both. Plans on display reveal they hope to build two small stands - one with four rows of seats, the other with four steps of terracing - next to the social club on the east touchline, and erect a layout of lights with three masts on each side.

A sharp turn off Gurney Street brings you out in a small metalled car park. The social club, a red-brick single-storey structure with a pitched roof, is ahead, and the pitch up to the right. A cricket ground is down to the left. The football pitch has been cut into a shelf on falling ground, much of it occupied by arable land,

between the heights of Errington Woods and the flat coastal strip. The social club contains a bar, a stage and far more seats than required to cope with today's crowd, which features an energetic terrier, Rufus. The toilets are at the far end, and the gents are shared with the two teams. A combination of mind-altering embrocation fumes and industrial language will cause your eyes to water.

The only hardstanding, a flagged path, is on this near - east - side, and is accessed via smart metal gates painted blue and yellow, and dedicated to one T.W. Goldsmith (1942-1993). I presume he was a club stalwart, but Google has failed me in my research. Railings on posts, each painted white, enclose the pitch, which slopes slightly downhill towards the social club. The dug-outs, made of breeze block and whitewashed, face each other across the halfway line. The players emerge from a gap between the social club and an adjacent flat-topped building, which houses an earlier generation of changing rooms, used by the match officials. A hatch in a side wall dispenses refreshments. These, in a peculiar duplication of effort for such a small crowd, are also available in the clubhouse. There is little room for expansion. The land drops quickly at the east side and south end, the latter denoted by saplings bent double through exposure to years of a prevailing offshore wind. A large farm is located to the south-west, and a tractor growls along lanes next to fields filled with livestock and crops. A saucy sun flirts with light cloud. Now you see me, now you don't. It's a pleasant enough spot now; it'll be lovelier still in a few weeks. There is a grassy bank as far as the halfway line on the west side, behind which is a playground and a junior pitch. From here, the austere steelworks at Redcar dominates to the north-east, and the grey North Sea provides a lifeless backdrop to the rooftops of Marske. Flat grass behind the north end backs on to Gurney Street and its long row of semis, which climb the hillside until the woods bring them to an abrupt halt.

Despite the score, don't get carried away with the idea this was a one-sided game. The difference between the teams was Rob Jones, a compact, mobile striker, who scored twice and set up the third goal as New Marske maintained their title challenge at the expense of an industrious Jarrow side also in form and well up the table. The rivals meet again at Gurney Street this weekend in the semi-finals of the Monkwearmouth Charity Cup, one of New Marske's trophy triumphs in 2007-08. The contest may not be as tight on Saturday because several of the Jarrow lads are off to Holland for a stag do. The wacky world of non-league football.

Jones broke the deadlock in the ninth minute when he made the most of a clever pass from skipper Nicky Ward by shaking off his marker and firing a low, angled drive across keeper Gary Rogers and into the far bottom corner. Jarrow were on top for much of the rest of the first half. Chris Lynn directed a downward header inches wide of an upright, captain Andrew Barclay somehow sliced wide with only keeper Justin Hutchinson to beat, and Liam Clark was fractionally too high with a powerful volley. A lively contest was given a bit more spice when a couple of spiteful challenges involving home defender Mark Lilley sparked a bout of pushing and shoving. Just like a Saturday night, but without pints in hand.

New Marske, playing for the first time in five weeks, had the clearest chances early in the second half. Daniel Wilkinson's goal-bound drive was deflected wide by a defender's leg, and Peter Henderson cleared a close-range Jones prod off his own line. A full-back on his post at a corner. Bravo. The clincher arrived with 17 minutes left. Jones engineered space on the left side of the box and his lofted drive from 12 yards flew over Rogers and into the top corner. Team-mate Jamie Dewing blazed wastefully over in a one-on-one before, in the 85th minute, substitute Steve Hodgson rammed a follow-up past the Jarrow keeper at the second time of asking after Jones had rattled the underside of the crossbar with a 20-yard thunderbolt. Just to prove it really wasn't Jarrow's day, when a consolation goal looked certain, Daryl Turnbull's weak finish was cleared off the line by Philip Rees.

You get the impression New Marske have outgrown the Wearside League. Once their stands and floodlights are up, they will be well placed to join neighbours Marske United, beaten in the FA Vase quarter-finals on this same afternoon, in the Northern League, goal for so many smaller clubs in the region. New Marske's string of junior teams should provide all the talent the senior XI needs. With Teesside Athletic, based in nearby Redcar, another local club on the up and also aiming for the holy grail of the Northern League, the outlook appears bright for this hotbed of football by the sea.

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