

TT No.246: Keith Aslan - Sat 5th June 2010 (ko 15.03); **Silsden AFC** v Keighley Phoenix; Post Season Friendly; Result: 1-1; Admission: £2; Programme: 28 pages w/a; Attendance: 112 (80 home, 31 away & 1 neutral).

With their reserves currently playing there, Silsden are hoping that their first team will be returning to the village and this friendly with local rivals Keighley Phoenix was an ideal opportunity to see what progress was being made. On the hottest day of the year I set off early to make a day of it in this most beautiful part of the country.

The train left Kings Cross six minutes late because somebody had managed to lock themselves in the toilet which in all my years of train travel was a new one on me. It wasn't even one of those ultra-modern automatic ones that require an engineering degree to operate. Just a (pardon the pun) bog standard manual door lock which I would have thought would be impossible to trap yourself behind. The train manager (nee guard) tried everything before calling the maintenance man who used a heady combination of brute force and ignorance to no effect either. He had to fetch his tool box where a hammer and chisel finally released the embarrassed customer (nee passenger). Great entertainment for the rest of the carriage and I would like to think of it as divine retribution for using the toilet while the train was standing in a station.

Arriving mid-morning in Keighley I took a ride on the Keighley and Worth Valley Heritage Railway. Now I'm not one of those people who get all gooey-eyed at the sight of a steam engine, but I do like riding round on trains, which, given my hobby, is just as well. If you've ever seen a costume drama that involves trains, the chances are it will have been shot on this line. It's most notable claim to fame is the seminal British film, *The Railway Children*, which was filmed here. A frisson ran through the carriage when it was announced we were passing the spot where Jenny Agutter flagged down the train with her petticoat. Ah cinema gold, I can't wait for Christmas to see the film again. A nice touch in historical accuracy was when we were constantly referred to as passengers and not customers!

On returning to Keighley I caught the 'proper' train, one stop up the line to Steeton Station (four trains an hour, excellent service) from where the ground is a 12-minute walk towards Silsden village. Given the game was in aid of Cancer Research they could have charged more than the paltry £2 admission which included a superb colour 28-page programme, no adverts, and choc-full of old photographs and reading matter on the history of both teams and football in Keighley in general. This must have been a labour of love for the editor.

It must be said that North West Counties football won't be appearing at this venue any time soon. It has a nice little stand, and that's about it. Very little work has been done on the necessary upgrade, with money, as usual, being the sticking point. It certainly is a picturesque setting, surrounded as it is on all sides by the

Yorkshire Moors. It has a brand-new dressing room complex and clubhouse which is shared by the cricket team who were playing a match on the adjacent pitch.

With time to kill I walked a further ten minutes up the road to Silsden village, a lovely spot and I can recommend the Kirkgate cafe for all your comestible requirements. I was somewhat taken aback when asking for a Roast Beef dinner if it was to eat in or take away. They obviously do things differently around these parts. I also visited the war memorial with the names of all of the 106 who died in the First World War. Given the size of the village this must have been a large proportion of the adult male population.

Back for the football which was no gentle romp in the sun. This was surprisingly competitive with both sides going all out to win and some of the tackling would not look out of place in a Chelsea v Leeds Cup Final. Everybody agreed what a good game it had been with a one-all draw being the perfect result. After the obligatory late start, the referee moved things along and didn't bother adding any pointless time on meaning the game finished at 4.44pm and I got home an hour earlier than expected. I can't remember the last time I watched 90 minutes of football that actually lasted 90 minutes. Radical or what?

This ground, is well worth a visit, as is the village and indeed the whole area, and if you aren't bothered with paper, Silsden Reserves play their home games here. Hopefully the day when the first team join them will not be too far distant.

06/20