

**TT No.59: Mike Latham** - Sunday 18th October 2009; FA Sunday Cup First Round: **Silsden AFC 2-1 Salford Celtic**; Attendance: varied but averaged out at about 60; Admission: £3; 32pp programme: £1.

The FA Sunday Cup was first competed for in the 1964-65 season and at one time attracted 1,600 requests for entry forms from prospective clubs. These days, entries are around the hundred-mark but with the chance to play at Anfield in the final the competition remains as popular and competitive as ever.

This first round tie brought together the Sunday side of Vodkat League members Silsden, whose first and second teams groundshare at Keighley Cougars Lawkholme Lane ground, and Salford Celtic, an FA Charter Standard Club who compete in the Eccles Sunday League.

With it, the tie had the added bonus of seeing a Silsden team on their Keighley Road ground and afforded the opportunity to visit the magnificent new £1m club house at the well-appointed ground which represents a massive step forward in the club's ambitions to stage senior non-league football here and end their ground-share at Keighley.

The Silsden ground is set in a scenic valley and is easy to reach off the Keighley road from Colne. The new club house is a striking building and has transformed the site, replacing the old brick building and wooden changing rooms previously shared by the village football and cricket teams.

The Silsden Sports Club, officially opened by Sports Minister and Bradford South MP Gerry Sutcliffe in September 2009, was the culmination of many years fundraising by the respective clubs and is a huge community asset. It was funded largely by a grant of over £660,000 from the Football Foundation with an additional Football Foundation grant of £300,000 through the Community Club Development Programme, but the clubs had also to contribute towards the project with substantial fundraising efforts of their own.

Silsden AFC are a true community club and are becoming well established in the Vodkat League after leaving behind the West Riding County Amateur League in 2004. They run several open age sides and a host of junior teams and their Keighley Road base has five full-sized football pitches none of which overlap the well-appointed cricket ground.

The main first team pitch has a small seated covered grandstand and was roped off for this Sunday Cup tie in accordance with FA regulations. Clearly the club have a lot of work to do to bring it up to the standards required for the Vodkat League but have a determination to do the necessary work as soon as possible.

Silsden's most famous supporter is the well-known local historian and author Rob Grillo whose book *Anoraknophobia* captured, in his own words 'the life and times

of a football obsessive.' Grillo's passion for the club and his eye for detail shines through in the informative and superbly researched club programme.

This was a terrific advert for this competition with both sides playing good, constructive football and in fine spirit. Silsden scored first on 46 seconds but the visitors equalised on 16 minutes and looked the likelier winners of a fast-flowing game. But with extra time beckoning Silsden's sub scored the winner with a fantastic lob over the 'keeper, just two minutes from the end of normal time. Referee Mr J Price was superb in his man management of the players and decision making.

Silsden are a friendly, progressive and ambitious club with deep roots in their local community and the opportunity to see them at Keighley Road is one not to be missed. It may not be too long before the main pitch is enclosed, floodlit and has additional accommodation and hard standing. Given the club's determination to progress and make things happen this may be sooner rather than later. I wish them well.

06/20