

**TT No.251: Mike Latham** - Monday 18 April 2011: Furness Premier League; Riflemans Garage Premier Division: **Kirkby United** 2-3 Millom Reserves; Attendance: 31 (h/c); No admission or programme; FGIF Match rating: 4\*.

The Furness Premier League has lost some of its member clubs in recent years with several first-teams moving up to the West Lancashire League. Clubs such as Vickerstown CC, Hawcoat Park, Furness Rovers, Dalton United, Walney Island, Ulverston GSK, Millom and Furness Cavaliers all compete in the WLL and many of those clubs field their reserve teams or A teams in the more localised Furness League.

The Premier Division has 12 member clubs, of which five are first teams: Barrow Wanderers, Bootle, Kirkby United, Haverigg United and Barrow Celtic. There are three divisions in total and the league operates a well maintained and informative website as part of the Mitoo facility that is regularly updated.

This Monday evening fixture, with a 6-15pm kick-off afforded an opportunity to visit a lovely, scenic village ground and the bonus was a well contested and skilful game that wouldn't have looked out of place higher up the pyramid.

Kirkby-in-Furness is a village on the Duddon estuary, mentioned in the Domesday Book and situated just south of Broughton-in-Furness and a few miles north-west of Ulverston. Much of the village's development came as a result of the Burlington Slate Quarries, which are owned by the Cavendish family of Holker Hall and Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, but these days Kirkby-in-Furness is largely a commuter village.

Kirkby United FC play at the village recreation ground, a fine facility that also accommodates the local cricket team who play in the North Lancashire & Cumbria League and a well-kept bowling green together with a children's playground. There is a backdrop inland of the distinctive village church with Kirkby Moor in the distance, rising to a peak of just over 1,000 feet and featuring a 12-turbine wind farm. There are beautiful sweeping views across the estuary and on two sides the ground is bordered by farmers' fields.

The football ground is neatly enclosed on three sides, the nearest side forming part of the cricket outfield. There are no spectator facilities as such, just open standing with the respective dug-outs being the only permanent structures.

Millom Reserves, playing down the considerable slope established a 2-0 lead at the interval, their impressive no10 scoring both goals. Kirkby fought back with two goals in six minutes just after the interval but the Millom striker completed his hat-trick midway through the half to seal a hard-earned win for his side. I have visited several grounds in the league, with Haverigg and Bootle particularly being well worth a visit and really enjoyed my visit to Kirkby-in-Furness, a beautiful and unspoilt part of the country.

