

TT No.207: Mike Latham - Monday 2 April 2012: Craven & District Football League Northern Plant Hire Round 2: **Embsay 7-0** Gargrave; Attendance: 38 (h/c); No admission or programme; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

There are many scenic locations in the Craven & District Football League, the most scenic I was assured being at Embsay. A visit there was therefore a must and though the weather was overcast and chilly it did not disappoint.

Embsay is a small village located about two miles north-east of Skipton in the Craven district of North Yorkshire. The village is perhaps best known for its railway station which is the current terminus on the Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway. Thomas the Tank Engine is a regular on this line.

As with many similar villages in this part of the world the cricket and football teams play an important role in the local community and live happily side by side. The address of the football club is Embsay Cricket and Football Field on Shires Lane but this is slightly misleading. I had expected the football ground to partly overlap the cricket outfield but though the teams change in the cricket pavilion the two fields are separate. Actually, getting to the football field involves negotiating a stone wall and then walking downwards into the valley bottom through a sheep field.

The football ground is enclosed by a stone wall on one side and sturdy wire fences on the others and has two dug-outs. The field not only slopes but is undulating and bumpy and must be quite the worst surface I've ever seen for a football game. But the spectacular views more than compensate. The landscape is varied because as well as sweeping views to crags, quarries and moorland there is also the railway station and engine sheds and stock to catch the eye.

This was a local derby, Gargrave being just a few miles away. The visitors were very much the underdogs, playing in the second tier of the league with Embsay being in the top division. The game kicked-off promptly at 6-15pm and the referee played two halves of 45 minutes, the match ending in the gloaming at just before 8pm.

For most of the first-half Gargrave gave a good account of themselves, trailing by a single goal and also hitting the bar. But having gone further behind to the penalty they conceded again to trail 3-0 at half-time. The second half became an exercise in damage limitation for the visitors; though they tried valiantly Embsay added four further goals including two more from the penalty mark.

Though far from the best game I've seen recently the cup-tie was played in a good spirit and attracted a decent turn-out of locals, a head count, just before half-time got to 38. And the scenic and unusual setting made this a most enjoyable visit; highly recommended.

