

**TT No.233: Mike Latham** - Weds 25 April 2012; **Wigton Harriers 2-0 Longtown**; Cumberland County League Prem Division; Attendance: 20 (h/c); No admission or programme; FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

There's nothing like a warm, sunny late Spring evening to enjoy a game in Cumbria- and this was nothing like one. The temperature dipped, the wind howled and the rain was coming down sideways over Shap. Arriving in Wigton there was a dismal scene when the football ground was located- the rain was coming down so strongly and the wind so fierce that the home team, bravely out on the field doing their warm-ups looked thoroughly weather beaten and bedraggled.

As if by magic just before the 6-30pm kick-off the rain stopped and patches of brightness appeared in the leaden skies. Though the wind persisted at least conditions were slightly better and a prompt start could be made. Longtown's players had arrived in dribs and drabs after a mad rush from work or college and had no time for a warm-up, which might not have been a bad thing on this occasion. Fortunately, the rain held off for most of the game though the wind chill was severe and the conditions inevitably affected the quality of the football.

Both sides tried hard to play constructively in the conditions; the home side won the game with a great finish midway through the first half and a penalty in added-on time in the second having spurned another penalty on the half-hour. Longtown had several spells of pressure particularly in the first half but the young home goalkeeper was excellent. Well controlled by an experienced referee with two good assistants this was an enjoyable match especially given the conditions.

The Harriers ground is on West Road on the Silloth Road out of town and is known as Barton Laws. It's a basic venue with partly railed fence, a changing block and a once used stand now boarded up and used for storing equipment. The pitch was excellent, so too the sweeping rural views to the south and the locals were friendly.

Wigton is a small market town to the west of Carlisle situated between the Caldbeck Fells and the Solway coast. It has good transport links being served by a railway station on the Cumbrian Coast Line, and the main A596 road from Workington to Carlisle. The town's principal employer is the Innovia Factory which dominates the landscape when looking north from the football ground. There's also a well-appointed rugby and cricket ground to the south of town on the B road that leads to J41 of the M6 motorway north of Penrith.

The Cumberland County League has two divisions and on the evidence of games I've seen a good standard of football. The league has a good website that is regularly updated and helpfully the league handbook is stored on the site under the heading 'League Documents' for downloading by interested parties, a fine facility that many other leagues could replicate. I enjoyed my trip to Wigton and

was glad I ignored the fearful weather forecast; for once fortune favoured the brave.

07/20