

TT No.151: Mike Latham - Thurs 25 April 2013: Westmorland League Division 4:
Ullswater United v Esthwaite Vale Utd; Result: 3-1; Attendance: 12 (h/c); FGIF
Match Rating: 4*.

Ever since I saw an epic photograph of this ground in Stuart Clarke's book *Homes of Football* (published in 1998) I had long aimed to visit the King George V Playing Fields in Patterdale. I wasn't to be disappointed. The journey from Penrith along the shoreline of Ullswater is stunning, the ground itself, bathed in early spring sunshine and surrounded by towering mountains is as beautiful a spot as can be imagined. Shared with cricket, the pavilion is a neat wooden structure, the square roped off and the grass still soggy after a deluge earlier in the day.

Both teams did well to muster the requisite number of players, subs and linesmen after a dash from work, school and college. They were doing their warm-ups well before the 6-45pm kick off. The game was well contested and played in a good spirit in the first half- the visitors (from Hawkshead) finally making their territorial advantage playing down the slope pay off with a well-worked opening goal, scored by a player who had dashed up from London in order to play and who was getting the late night train back down to the Smoke- now there's dedication.

But just before half-time a visiting defender was red carded for a last man tackle just as the home forward was about to score. If the referee had held his whistle just a second, he would have been signalling a goal; instead he awarded a penalty and red-carded the Vale defender. Ullswater duly equalised from the spot, then had a man advantage throughout the second half.

Vale felt an increasing amount of dismay throughout the second half at what they perceived to be an unfair decision. Their dismay increased with the yellow card count, several for dissent. Ullswater got on with the job in hand, scored two more goals and ended up winning the game comfortably after being second best for most of the first-half.

Patterdale is a small village in the eastern part of the Lake District, the cricket team plays in the Eden Valley Cricket League. Best known perhaps as the starting point for a number of epic hill walks made famous by the writings of Alfred Wainwright, the most famous of is the Striding Edge path up to Helvellyn.

It was a peaceful evening in the Lakes, the noise from the sheep dotted around the nearby fields breaking the calm. That was until the football started- but even though passions ran high at times and the game was fiercely contested, the final whistle brought handshakes and smiles.

I love the Westmorland Football League- well organised, taken seriously but not too seriously, played in some stunning locations. Considering this was level four of the league the standard of play was good, the game always held the interest. I walked around the ground hoping to capture some of the scenes that Stuart Clarke

portrayed so beautifully in his inspirational book. The early evening sunshine was bright, the light still good and so I had no excuses for not doing so. A bit like the footballers in front of me I had a go, but whereas Clarke is Premiership class my own level was perhaps akin to the players I was watching. But just like them I know my limitations and can still enjoy operating within them. It was a simply marvellous evening of grassroots football.

04/20