

TT No.50: *Mike Latham* - Sat 30th January 2016; **Dent** v Endmoor KGR; Westmorland League, Mason & Freeman Cup 1; Result: 2-3; Attendance: 10 (h/c); No admission or programmes.

There are many beautifully located grounds in the Westmorland League and on a wet and bitterly cold January afternoon I was fortunate enough to visit one of the most striking. The rawness of the weather seemed to accentuate the raw beauty of Dent whose ground is located on the lowest part of the remote village close to the river bridge.

Dent is something of an anomaly, historically part of the West Riding but now part of Cumbria, but it is part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Located about five miles from Sedbergh and eight miles from Kirkby Lonsdale, its cobbled streets are a haven for walkers and holiday makers in the summer months, but on a day like this it was eerily quiet.

This league cup-tie had a conveniently early kick-off time of 1-30pm, allowing me to visit Kendal Town for the second half of their game against Witton Albion and take some updated photos of a ground I first visited over 30 years ago when they were known as Netherfield.

And the game was definitely on, confirmed by the Dent FC Twitter account in mid-morning- what a fantastic resource Twitter is to the groundhopper. But for that confirmation, I wouldn't have risked a long-distance visit such as this especially after such another bad week weather wise.

As I parked my car on the narrow lane next to the Church Bridge Playing Field, I could sense my arrival had created some interest and players from both sides interrupted their warm-ups to peer over the stone walls. I soon realised why. The appointed match referee had not turned up and as a stranger in the area, and at kick-off time virtually the only spectator, it was assumed that I was the said match official, a notion I soon dispelled.

In the event the game went ahead with what appeared to the manager of the visiting team taking charge. I thought he did rather well and a decent game ensued, a far better outcome than the necessary abandonment that would have occurred in some leagues.

Dent is in Dentedale, a farming community, with scattered homesteads in a peaceful and beautiful part of the world. The roots of settlements here can be traced to the Vikings in the tenth century.

Dent's most famous resident was Adam Sedgwick, (1785-1873), professor of geology at Cambridge University, who was one of the greatest field geologists of his time. The village is also famous for its 18th century knitters, both men and women who prodigiously knitted gloves and socks, often while walking to the fields. At this

time around 2,000 people lived in the village, many working in the now disused quarries nearby.

Some four or five miles towards Cowgill, can be found Dent station which at over 1100 feet is the highest railway station in England, lying on the famous Carlisle to Settle Railway. The highly regarded Dent Brewery is also located in Cowgill and the long- distance footpath the Dales Way passes through the village.

The pitch was heavy but perfectly playable and a vigorous and competitive game warmed the spirits on such a raw day. I spent most of the afternoon sheltering in the cricket pavilion from where a decent view of the action could be gained and was joined by a very pleasant retired couple from Leeds who keep a caravan in Dent and gave me very interesting background information on the village which clearly has a great community spirit.

As we chatted the game came to life, with three goals in quick succession either side of a sensibly truncated half-time interval. Dent came from behind to lead 2-1 and my new found friends, clearly showing some passion for the village they have taken to their hearts were delighted. But Endmoor scrambled an equaliser and, with extra-time beckoning grabbed the winner- an angled free-kick eluding a mass of bodies in the penalty area to creep over the line.

With spectacular views on all sides, a beautiful church in the near distance and sheep clad fells rising from the valley floor Dent is a wonderful place to watch football. I love the Westmorland League and would recommend groundhoppers exploring the grounds which are often scenic and spectacular. The league has an excellently maintained website and several clubs have their own Twitter accounts.

04/20