

**TT No.55: *Mike Latham*** - Sat 13 February 2016 - Westmorland League Division 2: **Braithwaite 0-0 Endmoor KGR**; No admission or programme; Attendance: 10 (h/c).

The snow-tipped peak of Skiddaw glinted in the watery February sunshine on a fine but cold afternoon and its glorious backdrop atoned for the lack of a goal in this hard-fought encounter.

I've nearly completed the Westmorland League and this was my first 0-0, so I suppose it had to happen sometime. The best chance went to the visitors' no10 who screwed his close range shot against the outside of a post from a few yards out midway through the first half.

Braithwaite is a small village located on the A66 west of Keswick on the road towards Cockermouth. The village lies to the south of the road but the Braithwaite Institute is on the right-hand side, to the north and is a fine facility for locals and the many holiday-makers who make this glorious spot their base, especially in the summer months. In August, I'm told, the site is taken over for three weeks by campers as part of the Braithwaite festival.

The Institute was opened in 1927 and built by the villagers of Braithwaite and neighbouring Thornthwaite to commemorate the First World War. There is a football pitch that slightly overlaps the village cricket field and some tennis courts with a small changing pavilion that doubles up for the football and cricket teams.

Keswick and Cockermouth suffered dreadfully in the recent floods that afflicted many parts of Cumbria but Braithwaite happily seems to have escaped many of the worst ravages of nature. The football pitch was in decent condition and the cricket square also looked like it would be ready to host games in the Eden Valley League in a couple of months.

I arrived early and was gratified to see a gang of home players and officials marking out the field and erecting the goal-posts. For once I had no need for a Plan B or even a Plan C. After a detour to visit friends in Cockermouth and a return journey via the glorious Whinlatter Pass I arrived back at the Institute, a distinctive white-painted building, just in time for the 2-30pm kick-off.

I'd seen Endmoor at Dent a few weeks ago and though they started the game in the lower reaches of the division they again looked a decent and well organised side. Third-placed Braithwaite started favourites but they struggled to create any clear-cut openings and though a hard-fought game always held the interest, not least because it was controlled by a really excellent referee who communicated effectively with the players and genuinely seemed to be enjoying himself, a goal eluded us.

I'd seen a few games on 3G surfaces lately in an attempt to get in some football and some new grounds in a spell of dreadfully wet weather. Those, kind of, surfaces, obviously have their worth but it was fantastic to see football played on

grass again and with such a glorious backdrop. The Westmorland League is well run and has some beautifully scenic grounds among its member clubs. Its reaches also extend far beyond the traditional boundaries of the old County of Westmorland. It's well worth a try for groundhoppers looking for a new league to conquer.

04/20