

TT No.78: Mike Latham - Sat 23 April 2016- Westmorland Football League Division One: Appleby 7-1 Ambleside United Venue: at Brough FC, Church Brough; Attendance: 36 (h/c); No admission or programme,

The damaging winter floods have had a lingering effect on several clubs in the Westmorland League and on the wider communities and no town or village suffered more than Appleby. Some of the television footage of the waters sweeping down the main streets of the town were harrowing as they carried a human cost with homes and possessions destroyed.

As a consequence, Appleby FC have been forced to vacate their ground, lying next to the River Eden and have been playing 'home' games eight miles away in Church Brough in the shadow of Brough Castle.

Brough is a historic settlement with roots to the Roman times and occupies a strategic position on the junction of the A685 from the M6 at Tebay through Kirkby Stephen to its junction with the A66, the main thoroughfare from Penrith to Scotch Corner.

Brough lies within the historic county of Westmorland and has a population of around 750. The village is on the site of the Roman fort of Verterae while Brough Castle was built in the 11th century within the northern part of the former fort. Church Brough lies to the south of the A66 with Market Brough to the north. Many hundreds of cars must pass by without stopping and I had been through this part of the world on many occasions on my way usually to football in the north-east via Barnard Castle and so it was great to stop and take in a game.

Brough Castle looked spectacular in the spring sunshine though the day was bitterly cold at times and the second half was accompanied by an occasional sleet and hailstone shower.

Appleby were the reigning champions of the Westmorland League but this time around have lost their title to Keswick though they still harbour hopes of runners-up spot. The visitors, not too long-ago members of the West Lancashire League have had major pitch problems of their own and their ground has finally been cleared of stones, debris and other contaminated material after the floods.

Played against the magnificent backdrop of the castle at the south end while traffic thundered by on the A66 to the north, the pitch was hard and bumpy and gave some spectacular bobbles. Most of the spectators gathered under a small cover that straddled the halfway line along one side though some watched from the other side behind which is a plantation of trees and shrubs originally inaugurated to mark the Coronation.

The teams changed in a stone building next to the primary school and then walked to the pitch across a wooden bridge over the river.

An experienced referee with good man management skills took control of a well contested game played in good spirit. After Appleby's young striker finished emphatically to give his side an early lead the portents looked bad for Ambleside who did well to fight their way back into the contest and they were good value for the 1-1 half-time score-line.

In the second half though, after Appleby regained the lead soon after the resumption, they went on to dominate the rest of the game and scored some impressive goals on their way to an emphatic 7-1 victory.

Within three-quarters of an hour of the finish I was watching Westmorland Cricket League action at Carnforth as this was the start of the cricket season in these parts. It was a bitterly cold day but thankfully the rain stayed away and I thoroughly enjoyed my afternoon watching football in the shadow of the famous castle.

The Westmorland Football League is well administered and run and has an updated FA Full-Time website. I'd recommend dipping into this league as though the play can be rudimentary at times some of the venues are set in spectacular scenery and there is always a warm welcome from club officials, pleased to welcome a new face to what is essentially a players' league.

04/20