

Westmorland County Football Association



The Early Years: 1897 - 1915

Not much is known from official documents about the first few years of the Westmorland County Football Association, from 1897 to 1905. Only after 1905 are there detailed Minutes.

However in reports on local football dating from 1896 in the "Kendal Mercury and Times" - the precursor of the "Westmorland Gazette" - what is referred to as "The Associationist Game" features along with the rugby code under the headline of Football.

Kendal was obviously the centre of the game with Maude's Meadow the venue for both codes of football. The Kendal Associationists played Skerton and three Barrow sides - United, Old Boys and Carlton Rangers. Kendal had a successful year in 1896 and a league table published on March 14 shows them top with 11 points from 6 games, 5 points ahead of Barrow United.

In April 1896 that year there is a dramatic account of a game between Kendal and Preston North End Reserves before a crowd of 1,000 on Maude's Meadow. Kendal gave their all but found their opponents too strong in the end. One interesting detail concerns a penalty miss by Kendal when it states that the goalkeeper "standing about nine yards out instead of six, easily cleared".

A match for "The County Championship" of Westmorland is reported on April 24, 1897, when Kendal defeated Appleby 1-0 in the return game following a 1-1 draw. This ended a season which was successful from a playing point of view but less so financially. County Cup competitions are reported from 1897 onwards with teams from Kendal, Burneside, Grasmere, Ambleside, Bowness and Patterdale featuring. In 1899, for example, there is a long report of the "Westmorland Association cup competition" in the Gazette of February 2. There was a game between Milnthorpe and Windermere, in which Milnthorpe were the better footballing side but Windermere far stronger in "rushes" and in defence.

Burneside had "formidable rivals" in Grange and the game was drawn, as was that between Patterdale and Grasmere. Bowness played Ambleside and defeated them comfortably.

In the "Mercury" of December 3rd, 1897, however, there is a detailed report of a meeting held in Windermere, attended by representative of seven clubs - Kendal, Patterdale, Windermere, Burneside, Bowness, Ambleside and Grasmere - at which Mr J W T Cragg of Kendal presided.

This meeting agreed to set up the Westmorland County Cup competition on a knock-out basis, with two divisions and the winner of each playing off for the trophy. A sub-committee, comprising one member of each club, would decide who apart from the original members could enter. The clubs were to be asked to subscribe to the cost of the cup, which was £5.

Also at that meeting it was agreed to apply for affiliation to the Football Association via the Lancashire County Football Association, because a minimum of fifty clubs was needed for a separate affiliation.

Milnthorpe, Troutbeck Bridge, Kirkby Lonsdale and Little Langdale were invited to join as well and the rules would be submitted to a meeting on December 11th.

There are few definite facts available about the growth of the Association between 1899 and 1905 when the first detailed Minutes were kept. According to the minutes of these early years, however the association was centred on Windermere, where all meetings were held, and the clubs came mainly from the area covering Kendal to Ambleside.

At the AGM in 1905 the President was Capt. R Rigg, Secretary A W Johnson and Chairman Mr Duxbury, familiar-sounding names even today. During those years if all the business was not completed the meetings were adjourned and held at a later date. This went on until at least the 1940s and was probably because of the need to use public transport in the days before general private motoring. Meetings were held earlier in the evening, say 5.30, and there is one case where a member had to leave to catch an 8 o'clock bus.

Attendance at meetings was restricted in 1905 to members from Windermere, Bowness, Burneside, Langdale, Grasmere and Staveley. The Cup Competition was played on a League basis and there was a choice between goal average or a play-off to decide league winners. The restricted nature is shown by a quote from the Minutes, which states: "area not to extend south of Burneside". Kendal and Milnthorpe clubs had their own competitions.

When a Kendal team did enter the competitions, playing as Kendal Swifts, they were quickly and often in disciplinary trouble for a variety of offences - ranging from unregistered players to unruly behaviour - and had their ground closed for a time.

Reading the list of offences at that time shows that little has changed - unregistered players, abusive language, wearing the wrong colours and playing in unauthorised competitions were some of the main offences.

As well as the Senior Competition there was the "Junior Charity League", the winners of which had automatic entry into the Senior Cup. Kick-offs were to be "no later than" 4pm in September and 3.30 in October. Representative games were played, usually against Cumberland, and badges were awarded. For one such game at Burneside there were special trains from Kendal. Westmorland lost 3 -1.

The problems of Kendal Swifts continued, with fines unpaid, non-fulfilment of fixtures, points deducted and letters going to and fro between them and the Westmorland County Football Association with depressing frequency. The honorarium for the Secretary in 1906 was £5. Some teams played in both Westmorland and North Lancashire competitions.

In 1907 a decision was made to have a Westmorland League, with fixtures throughout the season. The fifteen clubs which made up the first league were Ambleside, Bowness, Burneside, Gatebeck, Grasmere, Holme, Kendal Swifts, Kendal North End, Kendal Rovers, Kirkby Lonsdale, Milnthorpe, Oxenholme, Staveley, Tebay and Windermere. Sedbergh were invited but refused.

The Kirkby Stephen & District League was affiliated to the Westmorland County Football Association and included mainly teams from the Eden Valley. Problems of finance meant cancellation of inter-association fixtures when Cumberland could not afford to stage a game at Carlisle and then Birmingham wanted £15 plus half the gate to come and play at Kendal, so there was no match.

Establishing a regular league proved difficult. Despite seventeen clubs being represented at the 1908 Annual General Meeting, only four replied to a letter about the formation of a league.

Members who have struggled with Rules Revision of late will be interested to note this from September 9th, 1908:-

A Junior Player is one who has not played in more than 2 Senior matches in the same season or is in the opinion of the Executive not a 1st team player. Players taking part in 1st team matches in place of 1st teamers playing for the County, or as bona-fide substitutes for 1st team players to be exempt.

That same year, a Shield Competition for Junior players included a team called Lancaster Black Diamonds as well as Staveley, Grasmere, Windermere, Bowness and Ambleside Reserves. There was also a Penrith Rural League which included clubs in the north of the old County of Westmorland.

At the 1909 Annual General Meeting, matters included the rules of the Kirkby Stephen & District League, the start of examinations for referees and an eight team Westmorland League. Staveley were not accepted and there was also a Milnthorpe & District League. Professionalism reared its ugly head in the person of Robert Cole of Windermere who had played for Bradford City.

The Association has had many letters of resignation over the years but the one from Mr Jones in 1910 was unusual as it was written from his new home - in Newfoundland.

The County Cup Final that year was played at Burneside, both teams - Kendal Swifts and Windermere - got their rail fares and the losers, Windermere by 3-1, were awarded the match ball.

A meeting at Oxenholme decided there should be four divisions for the County Cup competition, each with representatives on the Council. Games would be on a "Home and Home" basis with the winners of Divisions A & B playing in one semi-final and of C & D in the other. In the event there were only three sections, made up of teams from suitable geographical areas.

'A' consisted of Grasmere, Ambleside, Langdale, Bowness, Staveley, Windermere and Patterdale; 'B' of Burneside, Kendal Swifts, Holme, Oxenholme, Milnthorpe, Kirkby Lonsdale and Carnforth; 'C' comprised of Tebay, Shap, Haweswater, Kirkby Stephen, Brough, Appleby and Sedbergh. Quite how they decided who went through to the semi-finals is not made clear.

1910 saw the Annual General Meeting being held in Kendal for the first time, showing that the centre of power was shifting from the Windermere area. The Council consisted of the Officers plus four representatives from each of the Westmorland, Milnthorpe and North Westmorland Leagues. Oxenholme had joined the North Lancashire League.

The years 1911 to 1913 saw the County play Cumberland again, a rail strike prevent Kendal Swifts from travelling to Appleby for a cup game and Appleby unable to play on another given date because they already had two games fixed for that day. A schoolboys league was formed in 1912 and a cup competition for Elementary Schools. Meetings were occasionally held away from Kendal, such as one at the Junction Hotel, Tebay and one at Kirkby Stephen. Four Divisional areas were in place although the two in the north had only four and three teams respectively.

All Vice-Presidents were asked for donations to swell the funds and for the County Cup Final in 1912, at Kendal between Bowness and Kirkby Stephen, we are told, "1 policeman is to be there to keep order if necessary". In 1913 only six Members and six clubs attended the Annual General Meeting. A deficit was declared and the Football Association provided a grant. The Secretary's honorarium was slashed to 3 Guineas, expenses for attending meetings were cut from 2/- to 1/- and each Division had only two representatives.

There were only three Divisions again and if there was not enough business Council Meetings would not be held. Instead there would be, for the first time, a sub-committee to do the cup draws. This met in January 1914.

In that year Bowness among other were reported for "importing" players for special games and in March, Staveley were disbanded. By September, of course, the onset of hostilities meant there had to be changes so the Council issued this statement:

The matter of continuing football for the present is to be left to the various leagues under the jurisdiction of the Westmorland Football Association, provided every possible encouragement be afforded to foster enlistment for the Service.

The County Cup was to be played for as usual but by the Annual General Meeting of 1915 it was obvious things were very different and the Council issued a further statement: "A competition be run for youths under 18 if sufficient interest can be got - such a competition to be on Saturday afternoons, early closing days and other recognised holidays".

Between the Wars: 1919 - 1939

When Minutes resumes on January 25th, 1919, the ravages of the war years are recognised in the request to clubs to form teams for an Under 16 competition. "Stringent qualifications hitherto existing will be relaxed owing to the exigencies of the situation" but, they added "players are only eligible one team". Also - at this time the Council asked for details of players killed, taken prisoner or commended during the war.

On the full resumption of football it was again with four divisions and with the first mention of Netherfield, in the same group as Oxenholme, Tebay and Shap. Castletown, Penrith, also joined and were quickly in trouble for fielding ineligible players. They appealed and a special meeting had to be called.

The Eden Valley League was formed in 1920 and sanctioned on condition that all clubs affiliated to Westmorland. The Hospital Cup was inaugurated with sixteen clubs entering.

There were still four divisions in 1921 when additional clubs included Kendal Green, Kirkby Thore, Sedgwick and Troutbeck. The County Cup was still run in divisions in 1922 but the Hospital Cup was a straight draw, comprising of twenty teams, namely; Arnside, Oxenholme, Tebay, Staveley, Mealbank, Burneside, Kendal Green Villa, Netherfield Juniors, Netherfield Seniors, Ambleside, Sedbergh, Sedgwick, Gatebeck, Shepherds Rovers, Kendal YMCA, Grasmere, Milnthorpe, Kendal Green Athletic, Burton and Bowness.

A County team played Preston North End at Bowness that year, with two players each from Windermere, Bowness and Staveley, and one from Burneside, Netherfield, Grasmere, Kendal Town and Ambleside - still nobody from the north east of the county.

The Westmorland League was in an unsatisfactory state that season, with fixtures unfinished, and a special meeting was called to sort out the problem.

Fifteen clubs attended the Annual General Meeting that year including, for the first time, Grayrigg. The cup was to be played for in two divisions with twenty clubs, meaning six games and eight byes. There was also a County games at Maudes Meadow against a team of British Internationals. The prices of admission were 1/6d with a further 6d for the stand. Three policemen were on duty and the team came from Kendal Town (3), Bowness and Ambleside (2), Burneside, Netherfield, Shap and Tebay 1 each. That same year the whole of the Appleby team was reported for not lining up after a goal and threatening to leave the field.

There were problems in 1923 when clubs were called to a meeting to discuss lack of progress in the county and only twelve turned up despite the urgency. Several points were raised to try to improve matters; including better referees and firmer control by the Football Association, better fixture arrangements, a sliding scale of referees' fees to reflect their ability and a system of promotion and relegation to encourage Junior teams.

It was agreed that more harmony was needed between the clubs and league secretaries. Referees should be tested on the field as well as in examinations.

The workings of the Milnthorpe and District League were deemed unsatisfactory and the Council took over the running of it. Brough complained that the Eden Valley League, which had replaced the North Westmorland one, had made an illegal alteration.

The first official Cup and Disciplinary Committees were set up and at the Disciplinary Meeting on December 23rd there was a case of foul language to be considered.

In 1924 a meeting for all club representatives drew only seven people and the Westmorland County Football Association decided to govern all leagues themselves. There were to be two distinct leagues, the Senior League and the Junior (Under 21) League. The momentous decision was taken that the Secretary should have a telephone "if not too expensive and expenses are booked".

A reporter from the Westmorland Gazette was present and it was decided the press should be welcomed to all meetings. The Westmorland County Football Association affiliated to the English

Schools Football Association and a delegates meeting was called to discuss 14 to 18 age group football.

One unregistered competition was singled out for reference in 1925 when the Waitby Cup was declared illegal and league players were warned in the press not to play in it. It is still going strong now, over seventy years later.

Another interesting decision was made that year when the Milnthorpe and District League decided no Kendal referee should officiate in a game which included a Kendal team. Referees were informed that they should all take up membership of the Referees' Association.

The future of football in the county was again causing concern in 1926, so an invitation along with an addressed return card was issued to all clubs to attend a meeting. Twelve attended, seven sent apologies and fifteen did not reply.

During the discussion one delegate said, "The League Executive is not a happy family". Other points were that poor referees should be weeded out, the system of registration and transfers should be improved and the amateur v professional conflict needed to be discussed more fully.

Two disciplinary matters are of interest. A player, G Beck of Milnthorpe, was disciplined in March for: 1) Foul language, 2) Refusing to give his name, 3) Dangerous play after a warning and 4) Striking the referee. He was fined 5/- and suspended until 31 December. A referee, J Fleming by name, was suspended for two years for not paying a fine and would be given no appointments until it was paid. The County side played a game against Bede College, Durham.

1927 saw the Westmorland league institute their own knock-out cup competition, the sudden death of the Secretary, Mr J W Pattinson, and Netherfield ordered to post notices at their ground because of disorderly conduct. A resolution was passed to the effect that: "no-one having connection with the Council shall act as referee or linesman in any competition game".

In 1928 a scarcity of referees was reported and the amount of money taken at the County Cup Final was noted for the first time - gate of £29/19/4d. Over the next three years it seems that interest in the running of football was low as there were poor attendances at the Annual General Meetings, particularly in 1929 when only seven turned up and 1931 when one less appeared.

The rules of the Junior Cup were revised in 1933 to read:

Any player having taken part in 3 or more Senior matches is ineligible.

This proposal narrowly defeated an amendment of "5 or more".

A new Thursday League was set up in 1933 as well. During the rest of the 1930s the books of certain clubs were being inspected regularly, clubs were warned about playing matches on County Cup Final day, the Secretary's honorarium went back up to £5 and Junior Cup semi-finals were played "Home and Home" because neutral grounds were too expensive. An unusual incident was reported at Tebay, when mud was slung at the referee. The club dealt with the incident themselves, saying "he is a lad we know".

The last Annual General Meeting before the war, in 1939, passed a resolution that the Council should be elected by clubs, in divisions, who were asked to nominate candidates.

The Post War Years and Beyond: 1946 - 1997

From 1946 onwards there are two sets of Minutes, one concerning the Committee which ran Junior football and the normal Council Minutes. Some members attended both sets of meetings but the two bodies appear to have run on separate lines. The Committee Minutes have details of the youth squads during those years and some interesting names appear.

These include two players who later turned professional. Carl Taylor of Kirkby Stephen was an outside right who went on to play for Middlesbrough with some success. J L 'Sonny' Simpson, from Appleby, began by playing left back in the County Junior side but later took to goalkeeping and played for Netherfield. His move into League football eventually took him to Gillingham where he was Player of the Year several times and became a great favourite with the supporters. In 1969, on completion of his 500th game for Gillingham, a letter of congratulations was sent to him from the Westmorland County Football Association.

Three Youth Players, from Netherfield, Esthwaite Vale and Coniston, went to London in 1947 to take part in a tournament.

Westmorland were asked to provide the ball boys for the Amateur Cup Final between Pegasus and Bishop Auckland in 1951, ten boys and three officials spending an exciting weekend in London.

Also in these minutes we see that in 1948 the referees were asking for higher fees to provide for more expensive equipment.

The Council Minute Book from 1949 to 1962 records in some detail the Annual General Meetings, including the Secretary's Reports, which were composed for most of those years by Mr S M Jones.

The 1948-49 report includes congratulations to three Westmorland teams for their success in three very different outside leagues. Netherfield won the Lancashire Combination, Shap triumphed in Division Two of the Carlisle and District League and Brough were winners of the Swaledale League.

The Council had an extra member in those days, a Mr R Brennan, who was the Exhibition and Publicity Secretary. His main function seemed to be the organisation of the annual Invitation Trophy game, for which league clubs were invited to play an exhibition game with the proceeds going to the Benevolent Fund. Blackpool, Blackburn, Everton, Sheffield Wednesday, Preston, Bury, Carlisle and Manchester City amongst others came and the biggest gate was recorded as 6,000. That was in 1955 when Blackpool played Bury. Eventually interest waned as clubs found less time for such matches and a loss was reported in season 1948-49.

The County Senior Team usually found games in the Northern Counties Competition a struggle but in 1956-57 the team won the title, defeating Northumberland, Cumberland, Lancashire and West Riding.

On a more mundane level, the problems of discipline continued to loom large in the mind of the Secretary when he gave his Annual Report and in 1957 he was quoted as saying that players must not forget "the ref is boss". In an earlier report clubs were urged to impress on their members "to play the game". Unfortunately certain individuals did not heed these words and there was one spectacular case in 1951 when a Sedbergh player was suspended sine die for striking the referee. He was also sued for damages and ordered to make a public apology.

By the end of the 1950s clubs were asked to pay 2/- for copies of the rule book, discipline cases were reported in detail in the minutes and the names of people familiar to us today appear in various capacities. John Dodgson and George Cragg were in official positions while Jack Rigg, Ronnie Plumbe, Jack Fleming and Walter Johnson appear amongst the referees mentioned.

During the 1960s the organisation of the Westmorland County Football Association became more formal with the setting-up of separate sub-committees for Referees, Rules Revision, County Team Selection and Discipline.

On the matter of Discipline, the punishments meted out seem lenient compared to nowadays, with a player who had committed three serious offences in one game merely being severely warned and fined in 1962.

In the 1962-63 season, permission was given for Netherfield and Corinthians to enter the FA Cup and for Appleby and Kendal United to enter the FA Amateur Cup. All counties wishing to enter the Northern Counties Competitions were asked to pay 2 guineas towards mementoes for the winners.

The regular pattern of monthly Council Meetings interspersed with Disciplinary Meetings when necessary emerged and the business at the Council Meetings bears a strong resemblance to present day concerns.

In November 1962 several matches were abandoned because of severe weather all over the county, due to extreme cold or fog. The Kendal & District Sunday League is first mentioned in late 1962 and there was some correspondence about the sanctions possible against clubs and players in that league, as if there was doubt about the Westmorland County Football Association's position with regard to discipline.

In 1963 J B Fleming and J K Butcher were appointed to the Lancashire Combination list of officials, referees' fees were increased to 5/-, albeit with two votes against at the Annual General Meeting, and the Westmorland County Football Association declined to partake in the new FA Pools set-up because it was felt there would not be sufficient interest. Two Westmorland players were nominated for the North Team to play the South at Crewe; A Wilson, Netherfield, and R Thornton, Kirkby Stephen. Wilson played in goal and had an outstanding game in a 1-1 draw.

There was considerable discussion between the Westmorland County Football Association and Kendal Town Council about the use and abuse of the Jubilee Fields, the problems being much the same ones as today, such as the pitches being used by scratch teams who pay no rental.

Violent conduct amongst players and spectators was rare but seemingly more threatening than it is now. Shap were ordered to post warning notices after a referee was threatened with violence by spectators and a strong altercation between a Lunesdale official and a referee was reported.

Coaching courses in the 1960s were conducted by the Central Council for Physical Recreation and the Westmorland County Football Association were expected to pay part of the cost.

An indication of how the organisation worked can be gained from the following "REMINDERS" to all clubs, issued by Secretary S M Jones on July 15th, 1963;

1. Have you paid your affiliation fee? If not, it must be paid before the first Saturday in August.
2. Have you returned your Form "A"? This was sent to you with the notice of the AGM. If not, please do so as early as possible or this may entail a fine.
3. Nominations for the County teams should be made to me before September 30th giving position and any other information possible and in the case of nominations for the Junior team, the date of birth. (In this case players must be under 18 on 1st September).
4. Entries for County cups must be made before 30th September together with respective forms. Any clubs not entering a competition will be placed in the competition considered most suitable.
5. All clubs wishing to be considered for allocation of Cup Final or International match tickets (England v Scotland at Glasgow) must make their application to me between 1st and 31st December. All applications do not necessarily mean that an allocation can be made.

This same document was issued by Mr Jones every season until he relinquished the post because of ill health.

In May 1964 the death was reported of long-serving Westmorland County Football Association member W P Rigg and his service to Westmorland football was recognised in a speech by G W Cragg, who then welcomed his son, J C L Rigg, as his replacement "by chance and according to rule".

Also in 1964 the Football Association published a Memorandum of notes for the guidance of County Football Associations, clubs and referees. One of the main points is the recognition that

Sunday football should be treated exactly the same as all the rest but that no club or player should be compelled to play on a Sunday, Good Friday or Christmas Day. No gate money should be taken at a Sunday game.

The Kendal Sunday League was still not fully affiliated to the Westmorland County Football Association in 1964 because some of their rules required amendment. In that same year T B Huck joined the Council and W B Johnson ran the line in a European game.

A player was suspended sine die for striking a referee and a future referee and current Council Member was suspended for one game for kicking an opponent. There were other suspensions for one or two games during the next few years as well as 7 and 14 day periods.

A joint commission of the Westmorland County Football Association and Lancashire Football Association was held in 1965 to investigate a case of "poaching" by Carnforth from Windermere. The case was proven and the total claimed in expenses was £3/13/6d for six people. A motion was proposed for the Annual General Meeting in 1965 to increase the clubs' affiliation fee to 3 guineas and it was carried unanimously. The large - for then - sum of £177 was raised at a benefit game and the Westmorland County Football Association donated a further £25.

1966 saw a very serious matter preoccupy the Council when the then Treasurer got into difficulties with finances and eventually resigned in 1967, to be replaced by J R Plumbe.

Other events occurred during the mid-50s: Netherfield won both divisions of the Lancashire Combination; professional rugby player T Colloby was banned from playing Sunday League football; Tom Finney switched on Corinthians' new floodlights; O Dixon joined the Council and a special dinner was held in 1967 to mark 21 years of service by President W P Dobson and Secretary S M Jones. The name of referee D Shepherd appears under Grade 2 in 1967-68.

An unusual event happened in March 1968 when a referee appeared before a Discipline Hearing accused of striking a player after a game. Evidence was given by several of the player's team mates and the case was proved.

A standardised version of the Referee's Report on disciplining players was suggested by J B Fleming and adopted at the Annual General Meeting, as were the printing of voting papers and copies of new rules for the meetings.

A rare event, the calling of an All Clubs Meeting, occurred in March 1968 to consider an appeal by Burton Thistle against a Westmorland League ruling. The ruling was upheld with only Burton Thistle voting against.

The pattern of football administration continued into the 1970s with only a few incidents to cause great concern. Despite current feelings that discipline is worse than it was the minutes of those meetings show exactly the same offences being committed as occur today - and a similar number of players who repeat offences again and again.

Westmorland Youth Teams over the years have found larger Counties difficult to overcome but by and large all those chosen to represent the County have given great service and there are several ex-County Youth players still very active in the administration of Westmorland football.

Some, however, blotted their copybooks in various ways including one former County player, still active as a club administrator, who forged the signature of the Westmorland County Football Association Secretary on a letter which he described at the subsequent hearing as "a practical joke".

The devoted service to the Westmorland County Football Association of Mr S M Jones was ended in 1972 with his death, after a long illness. The tributes paid to him for his 25 years as Secretary testified to the respect and affection in which he was held by all in football.

J R Plumbe succeeded him as Secretary and held the post until his death in 1989 when J Fleming took over until 1996. He is now President as well as the County's representative on the Football Association. Such long service to Westmorland football by people like them - and others such as F

Thompson, G W Cragg, C J Dodgson and several more - is one reason why the County Football Association has commanded respect amongst players and administrators not only in Westmorland but over a wider area.

New blood is necessary of course but continuity of service means there is a vast amount of experience on tap which is invaluable.

In 1995 G W Cragg, the then President of the Westmorland County Football Association, was presented with a memento by the Football Association in recognition of 50 years in football. During that time he served as player, referee, club official, Council Member and Official. He had the good of football always at heart and could be relied on to give advice based on his extensive knowledge of the game.

As we near the turn of the century the thoughts of Council Members are directed towards the future of football in Westmorland, with several important issues to be faced. Women's football has not progressed very much in the county yet but there is no doubt it will spread and measures must be put in place to cope with any such expansion.

Co-operation between the Westmorland County Football Association Council, the Executive of the Westmorland League, the Referees' Association and all the members clubs is vital. Past experience of times when clubs failed to attend meetings or answer correspondence shows how quickly things can get out of hand. Minutes of meetings between Council Members and coaches from the 1980s display the need for what was described as "more harmonious relationships" and this applies equally to all aspects of the game.

The Annual General Meeting gives an opportunity for clubs to have their say about how things are done but often there is more talk after meetings than during them. One constant bone of contention is discipline and here it is vital that everyone understands how the system works. Perceived unfairness is often a result of mandatory sanctions by the Football Association, about which the County Football Association can do little or nothing.

No matter how much discussion takes place, however, there are issues which continually recur. One such is the matter of eligibility to play in the Junior Cup, which was first raised in 1908 and which is still causing proposed revision of the rule virtually every year. No matter what rule is made there will be people who find a way to get round it if they are determined enough.

All those who serve and have served on the Council over many years do what they do with great integrity and sincerity in the best interests of football and footballers.

Netherfield AFC

The Football Club from the English Lake District

Netherfield Football Club was formed in Kendal, Westmorland at the end of the First World War. The shoemakers from the Netherfield factory of "K" Shoes were provided with land at nearby Parkside and began to compete in the local leagues. In 1925 they won the Westmorland County Cup for the first time and by the late Twenties were playing in the FA Cup. With the demise of Kendal Town they became the area's top club until war again brought the game to a halt.

In 1945 the club joined the semi-professional ranks when it entered The Lancashire Combination and for the first time it played against Football League opposition when nearly 10,000 people watched the two FA Cup ties with Barrow. It soon established itself as a major club taking the Championship in 1949 and again qualifying to meet a Football League side, Gateshead, in the FA Cup. Cup success was becoming a habit and the next year over 15,000 were attracted to the 2nd Round tie at Watford. In 1955 Wrexham were visitors in the FA Cup and had to settle for a 3-3 draw and when Grimsby Town visited the following year it was the fifth time in eight years that the club had reached the 1st Round stage.

The Lancashire Combination Cup was won in 1956 and 1961 and in 1963 Chesterfield provided more Football League opposition in the FA Cup and were held to a draw at Parkside. 1965 saw the Combination title return to the club despite the sale of striker, Tom Brownlee to Bradford City in January. In 1968 the club accepted the still greater challenge of becoming founder members of the Northern Premier League.

1982 saw the club reach the 2nd Round of the FA Trophy after playing a total of seven games against Bridlington Trinity. While it established the club in the game's record books it also drained the finances and it was soon necessary to take a brief respite in a lower league. In 1987 the expansion of the Northern Premier League provided a route back and the club has recently seen a return to FA Cup success taking Conference sides Gateshead and Macclesfield to replays.

The club has been able to attract top names with former internationals, Alan Kennedy and Leighton James both playing for and managing the side but it has also found and developed local talent.

Refereeing in Westmorland 1897 - 1997

The Early Years: 1897-1934

When the Westmorland County Football Association was formed a list of referees was drawn up. They were known as "County Referees" and most were attached to one or other of the eight founder-member clubs; Kendal Town, Milnthorpe, Burneside, Windermere, Ambleside, Bowness, Grasmere and Patterdale. Several were members of the County Football Association Council, including Messrs Duxbury and Cragg.

The referee of the first County Cup Final, played at Maude's Meadow on 16 April 1898 between Windermere and Ambleside was Mr R Watson of Kendal. Other than reporting that he lined the teams up and the match kicked off on time no comment was made about his performance.

From 1897 until 1914, mention is made of several officials, namely J Duxbury, E Hunter, J McVity, J W T Cragg, R Watson, J Legge, J Braithwaite and a Mr Branthwaite. These formed the backbone of the County Referees until the outbreak of war but then when football started again in 1920 new names appeared, including J Harrison, W Fleming, P Ingall, S German, Taff Evans, Jim Thompson, R Rooke, J Powley, Tich Armstrong, Fred Thompson and Billy Chambers. The latter was seen as the most outstanding referee in the County in his time. Interestingly, in January 1966 the Westmorland Referees Association sent him a congratulatory telegram on the occasion of his marriage - at the age of 84.

In these early days referees had no coaching and they had to purchase a copy of the Laws of the Game from the Football Association. They met occasionally, either at the Cocoa Rooms in Stramongate or at each others' homes to discuss the Laws and any problems which had arisen in their previous games.

The success of these meetings prompted Fred Thompson and his other colleagues to join the "English Referees' Association" **June 1934** and so the official **Westmorland Referees' Association** came into being. At the pre-season meeting held, at the British Legion Ladies Room, the elected officers were: Chairman: Mr Fred Thompson, Secretary: Jack Powley, Treasurer: Bob Rooke, with 12 other members in attendance.

The first task of the Chairman was to encourage recruitment of all the referees officiating in County games. The Association helped to improve the standard of refereeing during the years between 1934 and 1939, which resulted in several being appointed to top Football Association Cup games.

With the outbreak of war, however, most members were called up into the armed forces so the progress of the flourishing association was halted after five years.

The Later Years: 1946-1997

On 21 January 1946 the **Westmorland Referees' Association** was reformed - again under the guidance of Fred Thompson. A meeting was held in the Savoy Café in Kendal, where it was agreed to inform the English Referees' Association that Westmorland was "Back in business again". This was the start of a new era which was to see many of the members reach the top of the Refereeing ladder nationally, bringing many honours to the county.

At a monthly meeting of the Association in 1946 the subject of referees' uniforms was raised and it was decided to approach the local Civil Defence Force to ask if they now had any spare blue battle-dress tunics. The reply to this reasonable request was that they should use their own clothing coupons to purchase them. Later the County Football Association allocated coupons for the purpose.

The Association began to flourish once more both in membership and in Football Association appointments and, as with any other such body, the success was due to sound administration. There have been many dedicated officers over the years.

Fred Thompson, founder member of the Association and also of Netherfield FC in 1920, started refereeing in 1927 and until his death in 1987 he gave 60 years of invaluable service to refereeing, holding the posts of President, Chairman, Secretary and Referees' Training Officer as well as serving for many years on the Westmorland Football Association Council, Westmorland League, Milnthorpe and District League and North West Combination. His contribution to football in our County, both to refereeing and in general, was truly remarkable and unsurpassed.

Jack Pooley JP of Hawkshead was the first President from 1952 until his death in 1969. He was an outstanding athlete in his day, winning many to fell races and his fitness enabled him to Referee into his late 60's.

Ron Plumbe served as Secretary from 1952 to 1972 and then became Secretary of the Westmorland County Football Association until he died in 1989. He was a local school teacher, an active Referee for 16 years, and a member of the Association for 43 years.

Jack Fleming was Chairman for 17 years, Referees' Representative on County Football Association and on the Westmorland League Executive. He is now the President of the Westmorland County Football Association and our representative on The Football Association Council. This year he was elected a Life Member of the Referees' Association, and he has served the Association well in his 43 years as a member.

Frank Middlebrough served as Assistant Secretary, then Secretary and now is President of the Association after 27 years in office and 39 as a member. He still serves with great enjoyment on the North West Division of the Referees' Association, where he represents Cumberland, Westmorland and the Isle of Man.

Walter Johnson was Chairman in 1973 and served as Referees' Representative on the Westmorland Football Association Council for 24 years, being a member of the Association for 40 years.

The Meritorious Service Award by the national Referees' Association for services to Refereeing have been awarded over the years to Fred Thompson, Ron Plumbe, Walter Johnson, Mike Peck and Frank Middlebrough.

The Westmorland Referees' Association is one of the smallest in the country, yet the honours it has brought to the County over the years at national level have been outstanding.

This is a selection of those honours:

Gavin Black Football League Linesman and Referee 1949 - 1956.

Jimmy Dodds Lancashire Combination Referee and Football League Line 1952 - 1954.

Dick Carlos Lancashire Combination Referee and Football League Line 1951 - 1953.

Ron Plumbe Lancashire Combination Referee and Football League Line 1954 - 1958, Linesman FA Amateur Cup Final Wembley 1958.

Walter Johnson Football League Referee and Linesman 1963 - 1978, 1964, Linesman European Cup Derry City v Steau Bucharest, 1967 Linesman European Nations Cup - Scotland v Wales, 1968 Linesman FA Cup Final - Everton v West Brom at Wembley, 1969 Reserve Official FA Cup Final Manchester City v Leicester City, 1970 Linesman Anglo Italian Cup - Napoli v Swindon Town, 1973 Linesman European Cup - Bayern Munich v Ajax, 1974 Linesman Friendly International - Scotland v East Germany, 1977 Linesman European Cup Winner Cup Semi Final - Anderlecht v Napoli.

Jack Fleming Lancashire Combination Referee and Football League Line 1964 - 1966, 1971 Linesman FA County Youth Cup Final.

Keith Butcher Football League Referee and Linesman 1972 - 1982, 1974 Linesman European Cup - Bronby v Liege.

Mike Peck Football League Referee and Linesman 1973 - 1994, FA Premier League Referee, 1985 Linesman Charity Shield Final Wembley, 1987 Linesman European Cup - Barcelona v Bayer Leverkusen, 1989 Linesman FA Cup Final at Wembley.

Keith Fawcett Northern Premier League Referee and Football League Line 1975 - 1982, 1981 Linesman UEFA Cup - Tjbanik Ostravaokd v Bayern Munich.

Gary Aplin Football League Referee and Linesman 1980 - 1991, 1976 Linesman FA Sunday Cup Final, 1983 Linesman FA Trophy Final Wembley, 1985 Linesman UEFA Cup - Inter Milan v Hamburg, 1986 Reserve Referee Freight Rover Cup Final - Wembley, 1987 Linesman European Cup - Ajax v Hamburg, 1988 Referee Football League Centenary Quarter Final Game Manchester United v Everton.

Bob Charnley Northern Premier League Linesman, 1985 Linesman FA Vase Final Wembley, 1988 Linesman FA Sunday Cup Semi- Final.

Peter Ducksbury Northern Premier League Referee and Linesman 1983 - 1996, 1988 Referee FA Sunday Cup Semi-Final.

Graham Belcher Northern Premier League Referee and Linesman 1991 to date, 1994 Referee FA Youth Cup Final.

The past efforts and dedication of the officials who have served the Westmorland Referees' Association have contributed much to the game in the County and the efforts of those who follow their example will guarantee a similar contribution in future.

The Westmorland County Football Association in a New Millennium

As one of the smallest County Associations in England there will always be pressure on Westmorland which larger Counties do not feel. Despite such pressures over the past 100 years Westmorland has contributed a great deal to football in the North of England.

Competing with bigger associations in inter-county competitions has often been a frustrating experience but also a rewarding one in allowing Westmorland players and officials to compare their standards of football and administration with others.

The current members of the Council, many of whom can draw on tremendous reserves of knowledge and experience, are all aware that football cannot remain static in a world which changes as quickly as this one. Some developments have yet to make their mark in Westmorland and the Council must be prepared to encourage these within the next ten years to set the pattern for the future.

Probably the most important development will prove to be the growth of ladies' football although at present there is a dearth of such teams in the County. The matter of how to encourage the formation of more teams in an area with few large centres of population is one which will require much serious thought.

There are several ladies fulfilling a role in the men's game as club secretaries but often their interest comes through their husbands or boy-friends and ends when their playing days are over. Perhaps interest can be encouraged to try and form ladies' teams based on, say, Kendal - one or two possibly - Milnthorpe, Windermere or Coniston, Kirkby Stephen and Appleby, drawing their players from the villages around the area.

The promotion of youth football, not only the skills of the game but also the right attitudes to it, must be a priority. If players' skills are to be recognised early, qualified coaches must be used and this will also ensure our duties under the Child Protection Act are recognised.

As with the ladies' teams it may often be hard to raise enough players in an age group from a small community, so perhaps district sides from the larger places is a possibility. The gap between Under 16 level and Senior football has always proved difficult for young players to bridge and perhaps an Under 18 league would be a good idea and improve our representative side in this age group.

The County Football Association must also assist in the provision of suitable grounds, kept in reasonable condition and improved by agreement and co-operation between clubs, private owners and local authorities. For the continued development of the game in the County it is essential that clubs continue to be represented in the National Pyramid of Football and that others are encouraged to do so through the appropriate leagues.

This will mean that grounds and changing facilities must be improved and, where possible, the provision of floodlights encouraged to enable clubs to play in midweek throughout the winter.

On a different subject, many members of the current Council are past the first flush of youth and it is vital that some younger people - perhaps now players or club officials - are encouraged and advised to consider standing for membership before too long.

The experience of our older colleagues need not be lost even if they come off the Council because they could become Vice Presidents with an active role in counselling the younger Councillors.

On more controversial matters, such as Discipline within the game, there is only so much the administrators can do. No matter how they try to instil the basics of fair play and sportsmanship into the younger generation the fact is that some behaviour which was not acceptable previously, particularly the frequent use of foul language, is tolerated if not actively encouraged in the wider society.

This means that when a younger player is pulled up for using on the soccer field words he uses all the time at work or in the pub he takes exception to being reprimanded and objects to the penalties

of fines or suspensions. There is no easy way round this and it will fall to future administrators to seek their own solutions for the benefit of the majority who do not offend in this way and for the good of the game.

On a more upbeat note, local football will continue to provide the means by which young men - and some young women - inspired by their idols in the higher reaches of the game can test their skills against each other in a structured and well-controlled environment.

The role of the Westmorland County Football Association as we move into our next 100 years and approach the millennium is as important as ever. This is a time for celebration but it is also a time for looking ahead with confidence in the future, based on pride in the achievements of the past.

Westmorland County Football Association Benevolent Fund

From soon after the Second World War the County Football Association began to administer a separate fund to help players who were in financial difficulties because of injuries while playing football.

To raise money for this purpose a game was played at the start of each season for the Benevolent Trophy.

To increase revenue the games were between invited teams from Football League Clubs, giving local football fans the chance to see famous players such as Finney and Matthews in those days before football on TV and much easier travel to league matches.

The games were played at Parkside Road and featured such teams as Preston North End, Blackpool, Blackburn, Everton, Sheffield Wednesday, Bury, Carlisle and on one occasion Manchester City. The biggest gate was recorded as 6,000 when Blackpool played Bury. As people were able to watch League Football more often interest in these challenge matches waned and a loss was reported one season.

The County Football Association continued to raise money for the Benevolent Fund without challenge games of that sort and the present set-up of the Benevolent Trophy evolved. At the beginning of each season four of the top teams in the County - the first Division Champions, County Senior Cup-Winners and two other chosen by the Council - play semi-finals and a final on consecutive Sundays to decide the winner and the proceeds of the game go to the Benevolent Fund, as do games for the Benevolent Trophy.

Every season there are players who are helped when serious injury prevents them from carrying on with their normal occupation or when illness strikes. Grants are also awarded by the Football Association in London if a club applies on behalf of a player but the funds administered by the County Football Association have been of great help to many young men who would otherwise have faced greater hardship.

While all clubs and players are advised to take out adequate insurance against accidents and football injuries there is still a place for the Benevolent Fund and there will continue to be so in the future.