

TT No.199: *Barry Neighbour* - Welsh Weekend Travels featuring **Swansea City** (Football Championship Division 1); **Bettws** (Welsh League Division 1) and **Grange Harlequins** (Welsh Premier League).

Friday 17th March 2006; **Swansea City** 2 Brentford 1; Coca Cola League 1; Attendance:13508; Programme 52 Pages A4 Size Priced at £3. Match Rating 4* (despite the result!).

When Swansea City's home game v Brentford was switched to Friday night to avoid Wales v France Rugby, I was all set for a weekend away especially as my only previous visit to the Veitch came 30 years ago in 1976 (also on a Friday night when I took my wife down to watch Bees lose 3-5 on our Honeymoon!). With that background I could not resist her plea to come to the new stadium. It wasn't too expensive and as admission was only £13 for a seat I could not really complain. Much has already been written about Swansea's new stadium and I can only endorse the plaudits as this is another superb facility where a visit is recommended. This was a vital promotion-clash, Brentford were 2nd and Swansea had slipped following a run of five consecutive draws. After an even opening spell it was the it was the home side who took the lead after 22-minutes when a cross eluded the visitors' defence and the ball was knocked back to Akinfenwa to sweep in from three yards. The Bees continued to play the better football and were soon level on 30 minutes when Andy Frampton rose above the static Swans defence to head home from a corner kick. Apart from a couple of dangerous free kicks it was all Brentford until early in the second half when Swansea made a double substitution bringing on Rory Fallon and Adrian Forbes who started to cause the visitors problems. The Bees held out until four minutes from time when Turner was adjudged to have fouled on the edge of the area. Robinson curled the resultant free kick over the wall and into the corner to take the points. Brentford deserved the draw but missed chances cost them dearly.

Next day Saturday 18th March 2006 - **Bettws** 5 AFC Llywdcoed 1; Macron Welsh League Division 1; Attendance: 41 (Headcount); 44 Page Programme 50p; Rating 3*

We were lucky to see this game. According to the programme notes contractors should have started work in early March (to build new dressing rooms). The ground has a small covered area. However, this was facing the howling wind. Bottom of the table Bettws belied their position with a strong display against fellow strugglers Llywdcoed and raced into a two-goal lead within 10 minutes. The third came midway through the half from a header and it was 3-0 at the break. With the wind behind them we expected Llywdcoed to come back in the second half but it was the home side who continued to dominate' increasing their lead when a poor pass from the keeper ricoched off the Bettws forwards leg and into the empty net. Llywdcoed pulled a goal back late in the game but it was the home side who capped a fine display with a fifth goal. Before the game we visited The Oddfellows Arms (the Bettws head-quarters) where a warm welcome is afforded to visitors.

Sunday 19th March 2006 - **Grange Harlequins** 0 TNS 3 Welsh Premiership;
Attendance 221; An Adequate 20 Page programme sold for £1; Rating 3*.

We visited The Cardiff Athletics Stadium for our final game. Champions-Elect TNS took 30 minutes to break down the young Harlequins defence with a scrambled goal. Another similar effort made it 2-0 at half-time. The second half saw TNS bring leading scorer Marc Lloyd Williams off the bench and within six minutes he headed the third to finish the game as a contest and the only question was how many more TNS would get. The answer was none although they did have three efforts disallowed for offside. This was not the best I have seen TNS play this season but it was enough to secure the points at basement side Grange who had a player sent off midway through the second half for an off the ball incident (although I am not convinced that the ref got the right player!).

Overall a good weekend with 3 new grounds, 12 Goals and 12 new Pubs!!

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