

22/10/05 TT No.81: Mike Latham - Caernarfon Town (Welsh Premier League)

Fri 21 Oct 2005, Welsh Premier League, Caernarfon Town 0-2 Rhyl (att.- 487)

Football was first played at the Oval, now home to Caernarfon Town, in 1888 and on entering the ground, set high above the historic Welsh coastal town, the traveller gets the feeling that here is a substantial and important ground.

Caernarfon's nickname is the Canaries and virtually everything inside the ground is painted yellow and green, including an imposing back wall behind the far goal that bears the legend 'Caernarfon'.

The ground is impressive and has excellent facilities- a large carpark and plush social club by the entrance where a warm welcome is given to travellers. There is one main turnstile block- which led to a substantial queue building by kick-off with the 300 or so Rhyl fans mostly arriving late. But all was good humour and the £6 admission gave entry to the ground including the small cantilevered seated stand that straddles the half-way line on the far side.

Behind the near-side goal is a small covered standing area and to the left, behind the corner flag, is an excellent club shop with a particularly good range of clothing and other souvenirs and a good collection of (mostly) Welsh programmes. The shop also opened at half-time. There is a small tea bar on the side next to the main stand that dispensed hot and cold drinks, hot dogs and pies at cheerful prices. There is a long cover behind the far goal.

The terrace down the other side is dominated by a huge television gantry built on the half-way line which can obscure views of fans who like to stand as near to the centre as possible. But the view from this terrace was probably the best on the ground. The pitch was in good condition though had a pronounced slope from side to side and top corner (nearest the club shop) to the far corner.

The programme was excellent value with several good articles and lots of statistics for only £1. It has a striking full colour cover with a striking aerial ground photograph of the Oval. As Welsh is spoken extensively in these parts the programme has several articles in Welsh with English sub-titles.

An early scrambled goal by the prolific Andy Moran took the sting out of the contest as Caernarfon struggled to counteract a well organised visiting defence. A fine tip-over save by the Rhyl 'keeper brought the home crowd to life and they thought that the equaliser had finally arrived only to be denied by a linesman's upraised flag for offside. Rhyl immediately went to the other end to clinch the game with a header from substitute Tommy Mutton seven minutes from time.

On a mild evening the long trip to Caernarfon along the A55 from Chester via Conwy and Bangor was worthwhile with a good game, friendly welcome and an atmospheric football ground making this one to recommend. With the 7-30pm

evening kick-off there was the bonus of an earlier getaway than usual and the roads home were virtually deserted in contrast to the outward journey. Match rating: 3*.

04/20