

TT No.196: Mike Latham - Sunday 1 April 2007: Montgomeryshire Cup Second Round. **Guilsfield** 1-2 Kerry. Attendance: 50 (headcount); Admission: free; No programme; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

There's nothing quite like the expectant wait for the *Football Traveller* thudding on the doorstep on a Wednesday morning, especially at this time of the year when the days of postponed games due to torrential rain are hopefully a thing of the past and visits can be planned with reasonable certainty.

The Traveller never fails to disappoint, throwing up fixtures that demand attendance and this was no exception. In the additional fixtures section were two mouth-watering clashes in the Montgomeryshire Cup barely six miles apart, Four Crosses v Caersws and Guilsfield v Kerry.

Torn for choice, I consulted the oracle, a well-known traveller who has done most of the Welsh grounds. 'Both worth doing but do Guilsfield,' was the advice. 'It's semi-rural with a rustic feel, a good-sized cover and tea-bar with pleasant views. And they're moving grounds soon so get it done. Four Crosses is a very friendly club but they are staying put so Guilsfield is the one.'

His advice, as ever, was spot-on. The journey south on the A483 on a sunlit afternoon was spectacular and, just after Four Crosses, the turn-off to Guilsfield appeared. Guilsfield is a small residential village on the outskirts of Welshpool just over the border from England. Tidy, neat and surrounded by spectacular scenery it looked a picture on such a glorious afternoon and soon the community centre where the football club is based appeared in view.

Since gaining promotion to the Cymru Alliance in 2001 Guilsfield have transformed the ground, building a steel rail fence around the pitch and putting seats in the small stand behind the dug-outs as well as constructing concrete paths around the ground. As with many clubs in this league they share their facilities with a community centre and the village primary school. The views across rolling fields, towards distant hills make this one of the best in the league to visit and the field, bordered on two sides by mature trees has an enclosed feel.

The club president, a most pleasant and friendly chap I had met earlier in the season outlined the plans for the future. The club plan to develop the adjoining field backing on to their current ground which is already used as a reserve pitch. They have been awarded a grant of over a quarter-of-a-million pounds and have plans to build a new stand, erect a new changing block and in the medium-term erect floodlights. With a floodlit all-weather pitch already on the site the complex will make a terrific community asset.

Though Guilsfield are regular issuers there was no programme on sale for this county cup-tie against Kerry of the Mid Wales League and no admission was taken

either. But by the 2-30pm kick-off time a crowd of around 50 including several travellers had assembled.

Guilsfield fielded a team mixed with first-teamers and reserves as the competition, it was explained to me, has stipulations over playing so many junior players. In Scotland on Friday I had been to a game with no linesman- we went one better this afternoon with one linesman while a club official patrolled the far side and did a good job, too.

Guilsfield dominated the first half despite the blustery conditions and hard pitch, taking the lead on the half-hour. But the goal-scorer had to immediately leave the field with a badly cut eye and with other injuries also the home side were reduced to nine players. Kerry spied their chance, scoring twice early in the second half to claim the spoils. Though one of the injured players returned, taking Guilsfield's compliment up to ten, there was no way back and the visitors secured, what was on paper at least, a shock win.

Guilsfield is a lovely ground to visit- the scenery is wonderful and there is a lovely, rustic feel to the place- a superbly maintained ground with not a hint of vandalism to be seen. And though they are moving only next door the clock is ticking if you would like to see them play on their current ground. A good way to spend a Sunday, and another coup for the Traveller. Just need an Easter Sunday fixture now with St Mirren v Rangers seemingly the only football game in the country that day. Unless next Wednesday's edition tells me differently.

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