

**TT No.252: Andy Sneddon** - Saturday 5th May 2007; **Barmouth & Dyffryn United 7** Llanfairfechan Town 4; Gwynedd League; Admission: By Donation; Programme: No; Att: 90 (head count).

Those of you that know me will know that I'm not a great fan of revisiting grounds. However, in the case of Barmouth's Park Road set up, I'm more than happy to go back whenever the opportunity arises. Partly this is down to the surroundings, partly the fact that we're usually on holiday and also partly to the fact that having spent so much time in the area over the last ten years that it's beginning to feel like a club I have an empathy and affection for.

One way and another there have been a number of changes at the ground over the last ten years but in essence it feels the same. It's at the very end of Park Road, just North of Barmouth's small but bustling (over a BH weekend) town centre. Barmouth is an old harbour town at the mouth of the stunning Mawddach Estuary, where the river meets Cardigan Bay. The small harbour area is very attractive with fishing boats and some very tempting cafes and the beach, which stretches for something like 10 miles to Harlech, is one of the best in Britain without question. Spectacular views are everywhere, with Cadair Idris dominating the South side of the Mawddach, the Rhinogs inland from Dyffryn Ardudwy (5 miles North of Barmouth and the village that lends its name to the clubs' title), sea views across Cardigan Bay towards the Llyn Peninsula and Porthmadog to the North and of course the Snowdon range itself to the North East. If you haven't been, have I sold it to you yet...?

Oh yes, the footy...the ground first - entering through the large iron gates in the SW corner of the ground the near end is partly railed (rustic style) and partly high metal fence to stop wayward shots breaking windows in the nearby houses. To the left is the old entrance which also houses a tea bar and the grounds-mans' store. Next along is the dressing rooms which are tiny and in a poor state and in desperate need of replacement (plans are in the early stage to do this). In front of the dressing rooms is a rather curious split dugout (far too small for two clubs!) and then there's the stand which although looking a little tatty around the edges would still provide good viewing for 100 or so on a wet day (and these, in West Wales, barely two hundred yards from the sea, are frequent!). The rest of the ground is open grass standing behind the newly erected rustic fence. Although this deters the proles from taking their bikes on the pitch its main function is to keep the rabbits off and it is, by all accounts, doing a first-class job; a quick glance at the pitch is testament to that. Although firm, it was in superb condition (helped no end by at least three fire engine loads of water that was kindly dispensed by the local branch of the Gwynedd Fire Service on the morning of the game). To top it off you then have the spectacular views of the cliffs which rise vertically over the ground, just a couple of hundred yards or so to the East.

The match itself was richly entertaining. Barmouth, needing 9 points from their remaining 6 games to be certain of the title were playing Llanfairfechan Town, sitting just below mid table and possibly with half an eye on a cup semi-final 48 hours later. An early goal for the home side settled the nerves but a cracking strike from the edge of the box soon levelled it. Then the turning point, a contentious decision (handball in the build-up not given) led to Barmouth's second, and before you knew it, they were 4-1 up and coasting to h/t. The second half saw the sides trade goals at regular intervals as both decided to forget about defence and just attack in the glorious sunshine and we were all richly entertained for the price of a donation in the tin.

Travellers still have number of chances to catch Barmouth & Dyffryn this season and they are well worth watching. The excellent new Gwynedd League website has up to date tables, fixtures and results, with games going on until the Eryri Shield Final on Spring Bank Holiday Monday evening.

Incidentally, Barmouth followed up this romp in the sun with an 8-0 thrashing of Bontnewydd on BH Monday, so now need just four more points to lift the title, whilst Llanfairfechan Town lost the Cwpan Gwynedd SF in the last minute to Llanllyfni 2-1. We were there for that one, but that can wait for another time...

06/20