

**TT No.127: *Mike Latham*** - Saturday 24 November 2007: Welsh Alliance League: **Amlwch Town 3-3 Halkyn United**. Attendance: 50 (h/c); Admission: £2; 28pp programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 4\*.

Amlwch is a small industrial town on the north-east tip of the Isle of Anglesey. In the 18th century its copper mines were the largest in the world and copper was exported to many different countries from the small port. Later, ship-building became the dominant industry and now tourism plays a large role in the town's economy.

Located about 15 miles from both Holyhead and Llangefni, Amlwch is nearby to the Wylfa power station at Cemaes where a Welsh Premier League club was once sited. These days Cemaes Bay have fallen to the Gwynned League and Llangefni Town carry the island's hopes in the WPL. But with Holyhead Hotspur making great strides on and off the field and having moved to an impressive new, floodlit ground there are high hopes they may join Llangefni in the top flight of Welsh football sooner rather than later. And Amlwch, back in the Welsh Alliance this season have realistic hopes of moving up to the Cymru Alliance, effectively level two of the Welsh pyramid.

It's a rainy morning after a frosty night and first it makes sense to check the game is on. No problem on this score as the league has a superb website that carries all the necessary information, not least the contact numbers and directions for all the member clubs. The secretary is happy to confirm the game will go ahead despite the pitch being on the soft side and after an easy journey along the A55 towards Anglesey and then after a comfortable 17-mile last leg from the Britannia Bridge past Bangor the town of Amlwch is coming into view. Left at Central Garage, right at the fire station and the modest ground is to be found.

It's an undulating though well-grassed pitch, surrounded by a blue and white painted railed fence. Three sides of the ground back onto housing, the far side having a farmer's field as its backdrop behind a stone wall. The only building is a multi-functional one, housing the dressing rooms, toilets and tea bar behind the nearside goal as well as providing some shelter from the elements. It won't win any artistic awards for its design but it does its job and the journey is made worthwhile by a warm welcome at the gate, where the veteran club official dispenses a 28-page programme and offers the heartening view that games against today's opponents, Halkyn, are always worth watching.

He explains that he spent two-and-a-half hours marking out the pitch the day before and was concerned then that the weather would cause a postponement but Anglesey had escaped the worst of the frost and rain overnight and the pitch was perfectly playable. He adds that the club's ground is named Lon Bach, or small road.

The programme is crammed full of local adverts and clearly the local community are taking a big role in the football club's revival. The club also has an excellent website- clear, concise and informative- a model for others to follow. The manager, Nige Ault, says in his programme notes that 'in all this squad is gelling into a great one' so this is clearly a game to savour. Halkyn, a friendly club I visited a couple of years ago for a Welsh Cup-tie against Caersws, are on the slide, having fallen out of the Cymru Alliance and being positioned just one place off the bottom of the Alliance.

And early impressions are not great- they arrive with just half-an-hour to go before kick-off in a beaten-up red mini-bus and conduct a hastily convened warm-up on the field. Their colours are yellow jerseys and socks with maroon shorts but several of their players are sporting blue shorts and socks and they start the game with nos 12 and 14 in the starting line-up while the home side, third in the league, are immaculately attired in an all-blue strip.

But first impressions can be misleading and that's the case here. In no time at all, or 15 minutes to be precise, the visitors are 3-0 and Amlwch are in disarray. The first goal is a tap-in off the post after a counter-attack, the second a penalty and the third a far post finish from a deep cross. With dark, scudding clouds overhead and a gale brewing it's a bleak scene but Amlwch finally get their game together.

Seven minutes before half-time they grab a life-line with a header from a right-wing free-kick and by the hour mark, after two early second half goals they're level. Surely, they will now prevail and Halkyn will rue missing several good chances when they were 3-0 up with the wind at their backs.

The last half-hour is an even contest though with chances at both ends. It's a thrilling game, hard-fought and full of goalmouth action and the referee's whistle descends exactly on the 90-minute mark despite several substitutions and injuries just as the home side have forced a corner in a desperate last-ditch search for a winner. But a draw is a fair result after an afternoon of rich entertainment.