

TT No.225: Mike Latham - Sat 5 April 2008: Cymru Alliance: **Llanfair PG 2-3** Prestatyn Town; Attendance: 160 (h/c); Admission: by donation; Programme: 40pp, £1; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

Time is drawing short to tick off Llanfair PG's Y Groes ground - the club will leave there at the end of the season and take up residence nearby at Meas Eilian.

Talking to the locals, although there will be sadness at leaving behind their old ground, the continual drainage problems have meant that the season has once again been ravaged by postponements, often at the last minute.

Moreover, situated as it is in a public park with a right of way down all four sides the club is unable to take a gate and have to resort to a club official walking round the ground taking a collection to help defray some of the expenses for competing at this level of football.

Though the day dawns bright and sunny, it's still wise to make a check call to Mr Munnery, the secretary. Fortunately, this game's definitely on and after an easy journey along the A55 and over the Menai Bridge the first left-turn, down the old A5 takes the traveller to the village of:

Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch, or Llanfair PG or Llanfairpwll as it is known in two of its most popular shortened forms.

The long form of the name (58 letters in length) is the longest officially recognised place name in the United Kingdom and the name is Welsh for 'St Mary's church in the hollow of the white hazel near to the rapid whirlpool and the church of St Tysilio of the red cave'.

A small village with a population of about 3,000 and predominantly Welsh-speaking, the football team has around since 1899 and have competed well in the Cymru Alliance for the last few years. Today, though, they are up against the champions-elect in Prestatyn, who go into the game needing just one point to guarantee the title.

The ground is easy to find, on the right-hand side of the A5 just before the railway station. Reassuringly, the groundsman is mowing the grass an hour before kick-off and as the weather is set fair there looks no likelihood of a postponement this time. There are few facilities and Y Groes is definitely one of the most basic in the Cymru Alliance.

The main facility is a small structure that encompasses the tea bar, dressing rooms and a small bench-style seated cover that is set at an angle to the pitch. This seems to double-up as a bowls club for the immaculately kept bowling green behind. The rest of the ground is open standing behind a single white-painted barred fence.

The views, though are terrific with the distant Snowdonia mountain range covered in snow and the magnificent statue in honour of the Marquis of Anglesey easily visible.

A decent-sized crowd has assembled by the 2-30pm kick-off, most supporting the visitors. But though Town, playing with the benefit of a strong wind, take an early lead through Fisher-Cooke the home side haven't read the script and deservedly go in at half-time 2-1 courtesy of two fine goals within a minute of each other midway through the first half. Roberts' superb cross-shot across the 'keeper is followed by a precise finish by Owen.

It takes Prestaytn some time to recover their composure and they suffer the agony of seeing Hault's penalty kick saved before Griffiths levels from the spot just after the hour-mark. Griffiths' fine finish 12 minutes from time decides the issue by which time the home side are down to ten men, their no. 6 red-carded for a foul.

Despite the feisty nature of the game the teams all shake hands afterwards and the Llanfair PG players line up to form a guard of honour, applauding the new Cymru Alliance champions off the field- a superb sporting gesture.

Llanfair PG still have eight home games remaining this season so there are still opportunities to visit Y Groes. If you get the chance then take it.

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