

TT No.230: Mike Latham - Thurs 10 April 2008: Welsh Nat'l League (Wrexham Area): **Cefn United** 4-3 Chirk AAA; Attendance: 60 (h/c); No admission or programme; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

The Wrexham Area league comprises clubs at level three of the Welsh pyramid and reinforces the point just what a soccer-dominated area this part of North Wales is. Quite what impact there will be if Wrexham lose their Football League place is left to be decided, but the fact that nearly every village in the area has a football team playing at a decent level shows what a hotbed of soccer can be found around here.

Cefn United FC's ground lies within a few hundred yards' walk of the Welsh Premier League base of NEWI Cefn Druids. United plays at Church Field in the neighbouring parish of Rhosymedre. The community of Cefn comprises the villages of Cefn Mawr, Acrefair, Penybryn, Newbridge, Plasmadoc and Rhosymedre and is situated on the northern slopes of the Dee Valley.

It's a former mining area with iron and steel and stone quarrying also featuring large in the district's industrial past. The Church Field ground is like many in this league, a field enclosed by a post and rail fence with a dressing room block, tea bar and dug-outs either side of the halfway line. The ground is to be found by taking the same directions out of Wrexham as if going to a Druids game (one of my regular haunts on a Friday evening in the winter months). After taking the Llangollen road off the A483 south of Wrexham and then heading towards Cefn Mawr, the ground is located by taking a right-hand turn by the side of the Park View nursing home, going over the river bridge and turning into the small car-park.

At 5-15pm on a sunlit, though chilly, spring evening club officials are erecting the goalposts, getting the tea bar ready and performing all the myriad of tasks that are necessary to stage a game of football. The teams arrive in dribs and drabs and a prompt start is made at 6-15pm with around 40 people in attendance (the number later swells to around the 60-mark).

No admission money is asked for, but I give a donation at the superb tea bar and in return receive a copy of an old programme (issued for a Welsh Trophy tie) and a club badge. The beefburgers here, made I was assured from top Canadian beef are top notch and, at just £1, are the cheapest on the circuit.

One side of the ground borders the local graveyard and often the ball is booted towards the gravestones. But it's a decent game, played at a good pace on a heavy, rather undulating pitch and played in an excellent spirit.

The home side start in dream fashion, earning a penalty after only 28 seconds and adding a second after seven minutes. By half-time, with the benefit of a second penalty award, they lead 3-1 but Chirk have only themselves to blame for having a penalty saved by the experienced home goalkeeper.

When Cefn add a fourth early in the second half a rout looks on the cards. But three substitutes revitalise Chirk and their impressive number 11, a former Welsh under-18s international I am told, scores twice in quick succession to set up a tense finish.

The Wrexham Area league is ideal for groundhoppers looking for early kick-offs in early and late season. The league has a superb website that is updated regularly and often goes on until mid-May with many fixtures played on midweek evenings. Though the grounds are often rudimentary the scenery is often stunning and the welcome warm from local club officials who are only too pleased to see you. Highly recommended.

06/20