

**TT No.96: Andy Sneddon - Welsh Travels for October 2007.**

Match 1 - 06-10-07; **Llanystumdwy** (Gwynedd League) 4 Pwllheli Res (Caernarfon League 1) 1 (aet); Att:70 (est.); Gate: £2; Prog: No (last issued 2003-2004 to the best of my knowledge).

In its own way this is an absolute gem: rather than being in the wild North West of Wales it feels more like a county league ground in the Costwolds than on the edge of some of the most stunning mountain scenery in the UK. The village itself is rather quaint - it's main claim to fame being that it's the birthplace of David Lloyd George - the ground, well, let's just say you need to know where it is!

Leaving the Porthmadog to Pwllheli road (A497) at the first exit for Llanystumdwy, you drive into the centre of the village (what there is of it) and as you pass over a small river bridge you will see a church immediately on your right. The ground is behind the church, access to which is down a narrow access track (a road it most certainly isn't!) between the church and the river through some pretty dense trees and bushes. You could, technically get a vehicle down here, but everyone, including the players and official's, park on the roads in the village.

A short walk along the track brings you to the ground and it's idyllic, £2 gets you access (and NO-ONE gets in without paying here - free loaders beware, she's takes no prisoners!) and it's all quite wonderfully rustic and rural. The pitch surround (3 sides) is rustic fencing, neat new dugouts are in place and the one open end (behind the church) has a tea bar up and running when we arrive half an hour before KO. The whole ground is pretty much surrounded by trees, so little in the way of distant views, but the immediate surroundings, on an unfeasibly pleasant early October afternoon, were a delight.

The game itself almost produced a shock, as the visitors held a 1-0 lead for much of the game before conceding with 10 minutes to go. ET had an air of inevitability about it as the visitors ran out of juice, but it was a good contest, played in a great spirit with good local support.

Again, this is very much "Welsh" territory, but I'm pleased to say that once again, all the people we spoke to couldn't have been more friendly and welcoming (but don't argue with the lady on the gate, you'll lose).

Match 2 - 13-10-2007; **New Quay** 9 Llandysul 0; Costcutter Ceredigion League Division 1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Att: 25.

My first toe dipped into the Ceredigion League top flight (don't you wish all top divisions were still numbered 1?) and one that gave mixed feelings: the game itself was poor, but that's no fault of the home side who could only beat what's put in front of them, whilst in contrast the ground, for its level (level 4), was a corker.

I'll get the game out of the way first: Llandysul, once a top side in this league, are down from running three senior sides to just one these days and at KO time had one player at the ground. The manager arrived with the kit just after three and his first question to the ref was "how many do we need for a game"...not a promising start...as it turned out they had 9, including a keeper in his 40's who so obviously wasn't - the first four shots on goal all went in - a tenth player arriving half an hour in. At this stage it was 5-0 and the game, was over (it was never a contest in the first place). If venturing to this league, I would be wary if Llandysul are the visitors, I'll say no more than that. However, New Quay did look a decent side, although it's hard to judge on an afternoon like this.

The ground though was terrific - what an unexpected gem. The striking feature is the dressing room block which is highly individual, almost impossible to describe, an architect's whim maybe! It's meant (I think) to resemble to waves of Cardigan Bay (onto which New Quay fronts), but it is highly unusual.

The good thing is that the overhangs at the front provide cover for 40-50 people and you're right next to the pitch so a good view is assured, there is a decent amount of hard standing down this side and around the inland end of the ground also - no need for wellies or walking boots here. The rest of that side of the ground is well elevated giving terrific views of the action.

The vast majority of the pitch is properly railed and the whole ground is pretty much tightly enclosed. So tight in fact, that the rail down the other side of the pitch is only useable to around halfway, where it meets the perimeter fence and further progress is impossible!

I suspect many of the grounds in this league will be rather more basic, but this is one that deserves inspection if you're ever down that way. I will certainly take a further look soon, but will choose my game a little more carefully!

For info: the league has a highly impressive and useful website with up to date fixtures, tables, ground/sec contacts etc at: <http://www.ceredigionleague.co.uk/>

Match 3 - 20-10-2007; Llanllyfni 2 Beaumaris Town 4; Gwynedd League Eryri Shield 1st Round; Att: 80-ish; Admission: £1 (by raffle ticket in second half!); Programme: Fanzine style monthly programme from tea bar, full colour, 16pp, £1.

With our original plans thrown into disarray by the lack of a referee at Talysarn, it was a case of any port in a storm at 1-30pm on Saturday. Luckily, Llanllyfni is no more than a couple of miles from Talysarn and arriving at 1-40 it was good to see both teams out warming up for the 2pm KO.

This is one of those grounds that you'd struggle to find if it wasn't a match day. The goals, pitch perimeter fence, dugouts & advertising boards (banners to be precise) all disappear once the game is over, leaving an open field behind the village hall. However, with everything set up, it feels very much like a proper venue, the only thing it lacks is cover.

To say they are only in the third season in existence, Llanllyfni come across as a very well run and organised club. All club officials have club jackets, there are plenty of sponsors, they have an excellent website, there's a well-stocked tea bar up and running (in the village hall kitchen, behind the Western goal, from where the monthly programme/fanzine is available), 1st goal-scorer tickets are sold before the game and a gate is taken during the second half. Oh, and they video the games as well! A crowd of around 80 watched the game, which, at this level, is more than commendable.

The ground is essentially the public park behind the village hall, but with everything "assembled", it feels so much better than this. The views, as is oft the case in this part of the world, are spectacular, with the dramatic slopes of the Nantlle Valley providing a stunning backdrop in the lowering Autumn sun.

The game itself was rich in entertainment, the homesters just about deserving their 1-0 half-time lead, but the visitors from Anglesey hit a rich vein of form in the second half scoring four straight goals, without reply, until 'llyfni got a second in stoppage time.

Talysarn will have to wait for another day. In hindsight, I'm rather glad there was no ref available for their cup tie; what we got as a last minute back up more than compensated in every way.

06/20