

TT No.164: Mike Latham - Sat 7 March 2009: Welsh National League (Wrexham Area): **Brickfield Rangers** 5-2 Acrefair Youth; Att: 20 (h/c); No admission; 24pp colour programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

Until I started to explore the Cymru Alliance and Welsh National League (Wrexham Area) leagues a few years ago, in my ignorance I hadn't realised just what a hotbed of football existed in the Wrexham area for a relatively small market town.

The Welsh National League is level three of the pyramid and it is only recently that Prestatyn Town, one of the groundhoppers' favourite clubs, was playing at this level. This season Llangollen Town are riding high with ambitions to follow Prestatyn into the Cymru Alliance and one day maybe aspire to a place in the elite of Welsh football.

Brickfield Rangers are another Wrexham based club and one that has a good reputation as a fine example of a community-based club.

They are based in Court Road, off Meredith Street to the south of Wrexham and just five minutes' drive from the Ruthin exit off the A483.

To say they are a community club is something of an understatement. Rangers, founded in 1976, run two open age sides and a host of junior sides ranging from under-fives to under 16s. They also run four girls' teams and a disability section which represents the club in local and national tournaments.

It's a remarkable club with deep roots in the local community- no wonder it was voted the FAW Football Trust Club of the Year for Wales in 2007.

The home base is at Court Road, commonly known as the Brickie. It is an impressive complex, boasting three full-size pitches and a changing room block together with canteen, a secure car park and a mini football area situated within a residential area.

The main pitch, used for first-team games is railed-off with dug-outs and the number of advertising boards on display is testimony to the support the club receives from local businesses.

The club also issue a programme- an outstanding full-colour 24-page production with a wealth of club news and features also containing some excellent colour photographs. The tea bar is up and running before kick-off and club chairman Paul Hooson, seeing a stranger in his midst, was only too pleased to roll out the welcome mat and give me a brief summary of the club's history and aspirations for the future.

With over 300 registered players across many age groups and a huge band of volunteer helpers Brickfield Rangers are the ultimate example of a community club, relying on the support of local people and having very little in the way of grants or other funding from outside sources.

The game pitched mid-table Brickfield up against Acrefair, second from bottom, with the earlier league game between the sides ending in an 8-1 victory for Rangers.

Acrefair gave a much better account of themselves in this game, restricting the hosts to a single goal lead at the break after the visiting goalkeeper saved a penalty and made several other fine stops. The only goal came from a well-placed free-kick around the defensive wall.

The second half though was a different story as Brickfield secured an ultimately convincing win, their striker Owen Williams notching a hat-trick, including a penalty, to atone for his earlier spot-kick miss.

The problem with this league is the lack of linesmen and though the referee tried his best to rule on offsides there were inevitably some disputed calls. In frustration the visitors' no3 let rip with a foul-mouthed invective late in the game and received a red card. It would be far better, in my opinion, to have each club put out a recognised linesman who also rules on offsides as well as throw-ins and take some pressure off the referee. This system works well in the West Lancashire League.

Brickfield are a superb example of a community club and afford a warm welcome to strangers. Their programme is outstanding. I would heartily recommend a visit here for a fine example of grass roots football at its very best.

06/20