

**TT No.191: Mark Jones** - Saturday 28 March 2009; **Meliden** 1 Mostyn Dragons 0 (HT 0-0); Clwyd League Division 2: Att: 31 (plus my dog) h/c; No admission taken, no programme, no refreshments.

INTERNATIONAL weekend - the curse of football in Wales - means no matches at step three and above on a Saturday so I took the opportunity to enjoy a rare afternoon off from my duties as press officer at Prestatyn Town to indulge a couple of my favourite pastimes, walking my dog Seren (a real Marley and Me story, I don't really 'do' dogs and we already had one so when it was suggested we get another I was "no, I forbid it, absolutely not, never, etc". Now we are inseparable buddies and the lovable brindle mongrel has become MY dog) and real ale.

A quick glance at the fixture list gave me a choice of our third XI at home to Y Glannau at Ffordd Marian in Gronant or a stroll to Meliden where the recently re-formed Villagers were entertaining table-toppers Mostyn Dragons, beaten just once in 17 outings so far and cruising to promotion from CL Division Two. No contest, so I wrapped up against a raw North Wales coast afternoon with the Irish Sea winds biting cold and giving an eye-watering wind chill factor, put Seren on her lead, and set off for Maes Pennant.

The most pleasant way to get to Meliden from Prestatyn is via the Prestatyn to Dyserth Walkway, a route cut from the track-bed of the old railway line that connected the resort to the quarry village of Dyserth just over four miles away. This stroll through another of the branch line closures of the 1960s takes you on a crescent shaped route from the bottom of Prestatyn town centre through pleasant woodlands and is by far the nicest way to reach Meliden on foot, the village being roughly halfway along the path.

Meliden predates Prestatyn by centuries, having been used as a lead mining site in Roman times and traces of its heritage can be seen all around the village, there's the Miners Arms pub and various items of restored quarrying equipment dotted around the place as a sort of industrial ornamentation. It's not really a pretty place but it does nestle at the foot of Craig Fawr - a large hill that towers above the community - and offers views out to the Irish Sea, the Great Orme and Llandudno, Liverpool and the spectacular North Hoyle windfarm. The village also offers three real ale pubs - the aforementioned Miners, the Red Lion and the Star Inn but only the Red serves food and very nice it is too! So, having done my bit for the village tourist board, what about the football?

There's been a team in Meliden since Adam were a lad but a few years ago a lack of players and more importantly, a committee and cash, caused the club to fold. But in early 2008 plans were afoot to resurrect the Villagers and reclaim a place in the Clwyd League. A small committee was set up, sponsors found and Meliden were accepted back into the league for season 2008/9.

Still playing in their familiar orange and black colours, it was good to see them back in the thick of things as I covered many of their bigger games in the Clwyd League and NWCFA Junior Cup as part of my job as a local newspaper reporter in the early 1990s.

Their opponents this afternoon is another 'fallen giant' - Mostyn Dragons. Mostyn had long been a power at Clwyd League level and enjoyed several seasons in the heady heights of the Cymru Alliance, even reaching the final of the Welsh Intermediate Cup (now the FAW Trophy) in 1992 where they were defeated by Abergavenny Thursdays but like Meliden, they had fallen through the ranks, broken up then reformed at this basic level.

The game was hardly a classic but both sides gave their all with Meliden giving no quarter to their promotion-bound opponents, Mostyn themselves tried to play football too - a testimony to their long serving and vastly experienced player-boss Geraint Rowlands who was with them through those Cymru Alliance days and it was also good to see the evergreen Kieron Griffiths still strutting his stuff at the age of 48, knocking quality balls around for fun and looking fresher than those less than half his age.

As it was Ben Edwards' 64th minute strike settled the game in Meliden's favour but Mostyn didn't look too despondent - they're going up and they know it although overall the game was a good advert for football at this level in Wales, providing you like it no-frills and earthy of course!

Maes Pennant is a basic ground, squared off on three sides by a council housing estate and bordered at the 'entrance' end by an all-weather games area and the portacabin-style dressing rooms. There is hard standing round one end and along one side. The ground is given more of a 'proper' feel by the roping off of both touchlines and the addition of half-a-dozen advertising hoardings. But there's no gate taken, no programmes and no refreshments so this really is a ground best visited in early or late season. They have one home midweek game scheduled, v St Asaph on Tuesday April 7th, kick off 6.15pm. Take a trip, it's worth it for the walk alone!

06/20