

TT No.66: Mike Latham - Sun 12 October 2008; Spar Mid Wales League; **Llanfyllin Town 2-7 Aberystwyth Tn Res**; Attendance: 70 (h/c); Admission: £2; Programme: 32pp by donation; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

If only there were more international weekends then opportunities such as this to visit beautifully situated grounds in relatively inaccessible parts of the country would arise more often.

The Spar Mid Wales League, level three of the Welsh pyramid, has split its fixtures across Thursday, Friday and Sunday to accommodate Wales' World Cup qualifying tie. On a warm and sunny autumnal afternoon, the chance to visit Llanfyllin is too good an opportunity to miss.

Llanfyllin is a small town situated in a deep valley and surrounded by rolling hills. Taking its name from a seventh century saint it is classed as a town from gaining a charter in 1293 though the population is only around 1,200.

The roads are relatively quiet and time allows a stop-off at The New Saints' new Park Hall home to take some photographs in daylight. My only visit there had been for an evening game. Easily found by taking the Whitchurch turn off the A483 at Oswestry and then following the road up by the rugby club, Park Hall is hardly a venue that sets the pulse racing.

Next stop is Treflan, former home of TNS when they were Total Network Solutions. Now having reverted to the village name of Llansantffraid FC who play in the Montgomery Amateur League, the ground looks unaltered from its days when it regularly staged Welsh Premier League games. Maybe it will again one day.

So, onto Llanfyllin, found by taking the right fork at the end of Llansantffraidd and journeying through glorious countryside for five miles or so. The ground is on the left-hand side just before the main centre of the town and is shared with a school complex. The pitch is enclosed by a neat post and rail fence and there is a smart seated stand, painted in light green with dug-outs in front bearing the legend: 'Clwb Pel-Droed Tref Llanfyllin Town Football Club'.

Sadly, even in this idyllic spot there are goblins around and the club has suffered from vandalism to the plastic seats that were purchased from Rhyl FC. Despite the stand being within stone-throwing distance of the police station it is apparently a haven for undesirables and the club have had to fork out for steel mesh fencing to make the stand more secure. The stand was built and dedicated to long-serving clubman and player-manager Martyn Digwood who died following a road accident in Italy while supporting the national team in 2003.

On such a glorious afternoon there can be few better places to watch a game of football and a decent sized crowd has assembled by the 2-30pm kick-off time. The visitors, reigning champions of the league, have undergone an impressive warm-up regime that shows they mean business. It pays off as within three minutes of the

game commencing, they are two goals to the good. By half-time the lead is extended to four.

Llanfyllin began the game bottom of the league though were spurred by a 5-4 win at UWA in their last outing. They fight back with spirit to reduce the arrears with two quick goals around the hour-mark, only for the visitors to finish strongly with a further three goals.

It's a fiercely fought game controlled expertly by a veteran referee who stands no messing. He has help from an ageing linesman suitably attired and a stand-in on the far side in civilian dress. Midway through the second half the referee decides his casually dressed assistant is talking to the spectators too much and requests that a replacement is made.

Admission money is taken at half-time- just £2 and a donation for an excellent programme with 20 pages of text for the season and a 12-page insert for the game. The club officials are friendly and welcoming.

There can be few more picturesque spots than this to watch a game of football and a visit to Llanfyllin, just over the border from Oswestry comes highly recommended.

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