

TT No. 125: Keith Aslan - Saturday December 12th 2009 (kick-off: 14.03);
Bethesda v Llangollen; Cymru Alliance; Result 1-1; Admission: £3; Programme: £1;
Attendance: 69 (59 home 5 away 5 neutral).

The rains had abated, the sun was shining, Cymru Alliance newcomers Bethesda were playing their first home game for eight weeks and to celebrate the occasion that nice Mr. Branson was keeping his rail replacement buses locked in their garage for the day. North Wales was the place to be.

After an uneventful trip to Bangor I picked up the bus for the 20-minute ride to Bethesda. A plug here for "Arriva Cymru" who've gone straight to the top of my list of favourite bus companies. Lots of buses and at a fare of £2 return an absolute bargain.

Bethesda is a mining village on the edge of the Snowdonia National Park. The scenery is spectacular and I had difficulty concentrating on the game, my eyes constantly wandering up to the mountains. The glossy rhaglen (Welsh for programme) has an excellent colour photograph on the front that conveys the beauty of the ground's location.

You enter behind the goal where all the infrastructure is to be found. To the left of the turnstiles are the changing rooms, hospitality lounge, and the all-important tea bar. To the right, in the corner is a small seated stand and next to it another small piece of cover for standing spectators. There is a concrete walkway along three sides of the ground with no spectators allowed behind the far goal. If, like myself, a circuit of the ground is integral to your visit, make sure you get it done before the game starts. The ground is enclosed from the road with a dry-stone wall, and it doesn't matter how many of them I come across, it never ceases to amaze me the skill involved in building them.

A festive offer of a free mince pie with every 50p cup of tea went down very well, and it's surprising, how many teas you can get through when accompanied by free grub. The game was an honest draw, the home team having the better of the first half, going in to the break one up, but as the game wore on, Llangollen got stronger with their equalizer fifteen minutes from time being well deserved.

Quite what the result means to either team is unknown and I had a very interesting chat with the Llangollen chairman about the proposed restructuring of Welsh football. Basically, the League of Wales is being cut to 12 clubs and with the residue going down to the feeder leagues. Its possible teams finishing 6 or 7 places from the bottom of the Cymru Alliance could be relegated to make way for them. Nobody actually knows exactly what is going to happen, least of all the Welsh F.A. The motive behind the L.O.W. down-sizing is to try and improve Welsh Clubs results in Europe. Quite how this works is lost on me, particularly as participation in the new "Super-League" will be based, not on results, but ground facilities, so it won't even include some of the best teams. Caersws, attendance of 85 on

Saturday, will require a stadium capable of holding the entire population of the village twice over. It certainly is a funny old game.

Bethesda is a fabulous place to watch your football. With a healthy backlog of fixtures already developing, midweek games at the end of the season are a certainty, and a good excuse to combine a match with a few days holiday in this most beautiful part of the world.

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