

TT No.216: *Mike Latham* - Sunday 27 March 2011: Mid Wales South League: **St Harmon** 1-5 Penybont; Admission: £2; No programme; Attendance: 40 (h/c).

The Mid Wales South League has a new web site this season but information about the league is still hard to glean.

Over the years I've rung up club secretaries who have been salmon fishing on the Tay, skiing in Switzerland and managers still in bed to confirm fixtures; after all a trip to mid Wales, especially with fuel prices the way they are is not to be done on a wing and a prayer.

This particular fixture was as problematic as any; St Harmon have a good website written with good humour but up until the Sunday morning was advertising the game as being at Penybont. I knew that Penybont's headquarters were at the excellent Severn Arms so made a call there; I was reliably informed that the ladies' team was playing at Penybont that afternoon and the first team was at St Harmon. The lady gave me the Chairman's number to double-check; he was most helpful, not only confirming the fixture and kick-off time (2-30pm) but giving me invaluable directions.

St Harmon play at a farmer's field in Pant-y-Dwr, just off the B4518 than links Rhyader and Llanidloes. If coming from the south go through St Harmon and pass through Pant-y-Dwr, taking a left up an unmarked lane by the side of a bus shelter. The ground is on the right-hand side in a few hundred yards; parking is in the farm yard on the left-hand side. The farm name and the name of the field is The Bryn, or bank.

The weather was dry but rather misty, spoiling some of the views up the valley. On a clear day the views must be spectacular. The ground is as basic as you could find but that is the charm of visiting places such as this. Most of the players seemed to arrive ready changed, the referee, too, parking by the entrance. The farm animals looked on with mild bemusement as 32 players (each side had five subs) made their way past cattle sheds and sheep pens, across the track to the field which is bordered by hedges.

At the entrance is a shed which doubles up as turnstile and tea room. A lady arrived in a car packed with goodies, large bottles of water and a Calor gas stove and in time at all we had a tea bar up and running. The only other structures on the field were two wooden dug-outs.

The locals were friendly and everyone seemed to know one another. The roots of St Harmon's formation, I was informed date back to Rhyader Town's time in the Welsh Premier League. The locals felt they weren't being given their opportunity so formed their own team and despite struggling at times have kept the team going. Last season Penybont had two teams in this league called United and Athletic but just before the start of this season found they would only be running

one team when one of the managers decided to pack in. They are just named Penybont and play in the centre of the village with the Severn Arms as HQ.

Around 40 spectators gathered around the touchlines by kick-off time. Penybont kicked downhill first half and led 3-0 at the break; their two strikers were particularly impressive. The home winger then curled in a spectacular shot soon after the resumption, enjoyed by the stragglers around the tea bar who had a perfect view. But the visitors responded with two further goals and ran out convincing winners in the end. I enjoyed the game which was well fought and played in a sporting spirit and the scenery. Grass roots football at its very best.

Within five minutes or so of the referee blowing for full-time the spectators had departed, the players had left in cars and the field and farmyard were back to normal; the animals looked relieved. With no shouts or whistles being blown there was hardly a sound save for the baas of sheep in the fields. Grass roots football at its best; simply fantastic.

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