

TT No. 108: Mike Latham - Sat 3 Dec 2011: Welsh Cup Third Round: FC Cefn 1-6 Aberystwyth Town; Attendance: 500(est.); Admission: Free; Programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

The Wrexham area, I have discovered these past few years, is a real footballing hotbed with nearly every village having a football team of some note, often playing on scenic grounds and offering a warm welcome. That's particularly true of the village of Cefn Mawr, where I've now seen football played on four grounds.

Former WPL side Cefn Druids, who now play in the Cymru Alliance, play at their impressive new home at The Rock, having left behind their atmospheric Plas Kynaston ground which was one of my favourites. Cefn United played in the Wrexham Area League and the Welsh Cup until folding three years or so ago, from a recreation ground close to a nursing home. So, when the draw was made, I realised that this was a good opportunity to see FC Cefn, formed only six years ago as a Sunday League side, especially as they were up against Aberystwyth Town in the third round of the Welsh Cup, the last 32 of the competition.

By contrast to Aber's well-appointed ground FC Cefn's home is altogether more homespun and one typical of the set-ups of many in a league I have grown to really enjoy in recent years. They played originally at Ty-Mawr Park before moving to their current ground which is known locally as 'The Muga; dominated at one end by the Tesco supermarket, due for opening early in 2012, built on the site of the Druids' old ground.

It was a strange experience to see many of the familiar landmarks of the Druids' ground while watching football a few hundred yards away. Next to the railway line and located at the lowest part of the village, The MUGA has basic facilities, two portable buildings for dressing rooms, a tea-hut and two dug-outs on the far side. The playing area is neatly railed with a metal grey-painted fence and most of the spectators gathered on the entrance side at the top of a grassed bank that afforded a superb view of the game.

FC Cefn are a well-run club; they have an excellent website and produced an informative programme for the game; they are also one of the top sides in the Premier Division of the Wrexham Area League, and went into this game on the back of an emphatic cup win at Mid Wales League side Montgomery Town.

Surprisingly, free admission was offered to spectators attending this game; after all, surely this would have been a money-spinner for a small club, especially as a rudimentary head-count revealed at least 500 spectators were in attendance on a bright though chilly afternoon. With officials' fees and expenses to pay it seemed a wasted opportunity to boost the coffers, especially as programmes were sold-out long before the 2pm kick-off.

Aber have been struggling so far this season in the WPL but they had far too much experience and know-how for their hosts. A goal after only 44 seconds settled the visitors' nerves and they added another on 14 minutes. Though their third goal was swiftly cancelled out by Williams' strike, the visitors went in at half-time 3-1 ahead and went on to win the tie in convincing fashion.

The large crowd watched the game attentively, the tea-hut did a roaring trade and Aber duly reached the last 16 of the competition without undue alarms despite the 'culture shock' that many of their players must have experienced. As an example of the enduring magic of the Welsh Cup and a showcase for an emerging club to host a Premier League club and emerge with great credit this was a splendid occasion; one enjoyed by supporters of both clubs and by the considerable number of groundhoppers attracted to the tie.

07/20