

**TT No.143: Mike Latham** - Sat 14 January 2012: Lock Stock Welsh Alliance Division 2: Gaerwen 4-3 Halkyn United; Attendance: 52 (h/c); Admission: £2; No programme (usually issue but printer problems, old issues from tea bar); FGIF Match Rating: 4\*.

A mid-January Saturday morning dawned with severe frost around for the first real time this winter; without further ado I decided to head to Anglesey, which from experience usually survives the worst ravages of what the elements throw at groundhoppers. Several friends had already visited Gaerwen FC and remarked upon the excellent facilities and the warm welcome they received; I was also impressed and enjoyed a good afternoon among good company.

Gaerwen is a small village on the A5 road, close to the A55, located about four miles west of Llanfairpwllgwyngyll and four miles north-east of Llangefni. A modern industrial estate provides the bulk of the local employment and the Gaerwen ground is to be found adjoining a school turning left off the A5 when heading towards Holyhead. No sooner had I arrived than I encountered two groundhopping friends from Lancashire, both tempted like me with the frost-free charms of Anglesey; I also met up with another groundhopper of my acquaintance, a railway buff who quickly informed me, without any prompting, that at Gaerwen was the southernmost station of the Anglesey Central Railway which was in use between 1864 and 1993. It was also used on the Bangor to Holyhead mainline until 1963. Within five minutes of arrival I felt at home, especially as an excellent tea bar was up and running, dispensing tasty bacon rolls and warm drinks to ward off the chill.

Gaerwen moved up from the Gwynedd League to join the second division of the Welsh Alliance League. They have a modest ground, but it is lovingly maintained, all spic and span painted in the club colours of red and black with three small covered stands and plenty of room for expansion should the need arise. The locals were friendly and though no programme was available due to printer problems back issues were available.

It was a gloriously sunny afternoon and the benefit of 2pm kick-offs at this time of year are that games are enjoyed in the best of the weather before the chill really sets in. With stunning views inland of Snowdonia as the backdrop we saw a good game with the visitors belying their bottom of the table position. It was 2-2 at half-time, the home side scoring early then equalising just on half-time after two fine strikes by Halkyn. Gaerwen went in front with a rebound from a penalty midway through the second half before their lively sub, just given international clearance by the Zimbabwe FA scored a fine individual goal. With the referee adding on six minutes added time Halkyn pulled one back and were unlucky not to return home with a share of the spoils.

I called in at the Waitrose at Menai Bridge on the way home, frequented by royalty on a regular basis. The home brand lasagne highly recommended. A little more than two hours later I was enjoying a quick pint of Holts Mild in the Crown on way home while hearing tales of woe from Chorley's trip to Frickley and Wanderers' visit to Old Trafford. With a certain smugness I felt I had spent my afternoon wisely. A visit to Gaerwen comes warmly recommended.

07/20