

TT No.47: *Andy Gallon* - Sat 17th September 2011; **Glantraeth** v Trearddur Bay United; FAW Welsh Trophy 1st Rd; Res: 2-4; Att: 43 (h/c); Admission: £2 (including 12pp programme); FGIF Match Rating: *****.

Club secretary and programme/website editor Stan Strickland describes Glantraeth's isolated and possibly unique ground as one of the loveliest in Wales on a nice day. Having visited on a gloriously sunny afternoon, rendered doubly enjoyable by a morning of torrential rain, we found it hard to disagree with his assessment. From the raised hardstanding along the west touchline of Cae Glantraeth, one looks across the sloping pitch, over the tiny main stand and beyond the silvery Menai Straits to the magnificent Snowdonia mountain range. Even with the highest summits capped in cloud, it was a stunning panorama.

Not that scenic diversions were required because this was a super cup tie between Anglesey neighbours. You took your eyes off the action at your peril. Gwynedd League newcomers Trearddur Bay, Anglesey League champions last season, sprang a surprise by ousting Welsh Alliance Second Division club Glantraeth. Victory for the visitors was particularly noteworthy because they played the last 26 minutes with 10 men. With the score locked at 2-2, midfielder Barry Haigh was sent off in unusual circumstances. Lacking neutral assistants, Rhuddlan referee Simon Newport was heard admitting to the players that he had not seen Haigh punch Robbie Jones. However, having observed a fat lip and a cut knuckle, he drew his own conclusions and despatched Haigh to the dressing rooms. The petulant Haigh compounded his felony by shoving the whistler in the chest before stomping off.

Confronted with a numerical advantage, Glan somehow lost the plot spectacularly. Their shape, discipline and marking evaporated. Trearddur Bay went ahead in the 73rd minute when former Glan defender Gwyn Owen headed in a back-post corner. A fourth goal for the visitors looked more likely than a home equaliser, and it arrived in the first minute of stoppage time. Sub Paul Muir was picked out by a cross from the right, and volleyed the clincher into the far corner of the net.

You certainly wouldn't have put money on this outcome at half-time, with Bay's Gareth Owen much the busier of the two keepers. Glan recovered from the shock of conceding a sixth-minute goal - Ryan Jones finishing confidently in a one-on-one - to dominate the opening period. Paul Rowlands swept home the equaliser from 16 yards in the 13th minute, and 10 minutes later, Anthony Hughes capped off a neat passing movement by making it 2-1. Chances were squandered at regular intervals by Glan, and they paid for their carelessness when, in the 58th minute, sub Ian Williams capitalised on poor marking to stab home for 2-2.

Glantraeth have played at this lovely little ground since their formation in 1984. Owing to various problems, mainly a shortage of players, they resigned from the Cymru Alliance in the summer of 2009, taking a year out of football to regroup and improve their facilities. It meant on their resumption Glan had to start in the

Gwynedd League, from which last season, as runners-up, they clinched promotion to the Second Division of the Welsh Alliance. Glan also lifted the North Wales Coast Intermediate Cup, one of four knockout competition triumphs, to complete a memorable comeback campaign. For a club once on the verge of the Welsh Premier League, a return to the Cymru Alliance ought to be achievable.

The name Glantraeth comes from a farm and a group of cottages, originally a restaurant. The nearest communities are the hamlets of Bodorgan and Malltraeth. The Joiners Arms in the latter provides a venue for post-match hospitality. Having wound along a meandering country lane from Bethel, a world away from the A55 dual carriageway which bisects the island, the sudden appearance of a football ground, surrounded by fields filled with grazing sheep, comes as a complete - an utterly delightful - surprise. Appropriately, the head of a ram features on the Glantraeth badge.

There is plenty of parking by the cottages (now holiday lets), and a lane down the side of them leads to the ground's unprepossessing entrance. Behind the goal at this near (south) end is a small cover over hardstanding and portable buildings housing toilets and Hel's Kitchen. The dressing rooms are about fifty yards to the south-west, and access is via a footbridge over a stream. Spectators also use this bridge to get into the ground. The main stand, a modern, boxy, all-seated structure, straddles the halfway line on the east side. Trees run the length of this side and the south end, but the rest of the ground is open and exposed. Uncovered hardstanding along the west touchline and north end backs onto fields owned by the adjacent farm, the owner of which leases the pitch to Glantraeth. There aren't any floodlights, which, frankly, would be terribly intrusive in such a resolutely rural environment.

If Cae Glantraeth says anything, it is that you don't need much in the way of facilities to create an enclosure of considerable charm. With Snowdonia's mountain landscape and the bleating of sheep as visual and aural backdrops, how can Glantraeth go wrong? Back, where we began, to Stan Strickland. Many FGIF readers will remember him for his long involvement behind the scenes at Burscough. He offered the benefit of his experience to Glantraeth after retiring to Anglesey. Stan, who lives in Bethel, a mile from the ground, could be seen buzzing about enthusiastically, organising before the match and taking photographs during it. "Stan lives for football," said the fella running the line for Glan, adding, with a smile, "don't we all?"

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