

TT No. 15: *Andy Gallon* - Sat 7th September 2013; **Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant v Penrhyncoch**; Cymru Alliance; Res: 1-2; Att: 96; Admission: £5 (including 32pp programme); FGIF Match Rating: **.

THE HOP: Heading to Dolgellau for a two-week holiday (honeymoon, no less), we wanted to find somewhere pleasant to break our journey and watch a Welsh game at an unticked ground. Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, the first of many tongue twisters encountered during our Celtic fortnight, fitted the bill perfectly.

THE PLACE: Mid Wales has to be one of the most underrated parts of the Principality. Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant is tucked away in the delightfully verdant Tanat Valley, a dale as green and pleasant as they come. There is little to see or do in the sleepy village itself and most visitors come here only to admire the nearby Pistyll Rhaeadr, at 150ft said to be Wales's highest waterfall. It is a double cascade on the Rhaeadr River, with the two sections separated by a natural stone arch dubbed Fairy Bridge. Simply follow Waterfall Road from the centre of Llanrhaeadr and keep going four miles. Apparently, the pistyll can get mobbed but was quiet enough at the dog end of the summer. Pleasingly, this is a proper village, with a post office, butcher's (superb pork and black pudding sausages!), general store, chip shop, restaurant and more pubs than seems necessary. No sign of ghastly multi-national chains here! Most of the business premises are grouped around a central square that is actually triangular. The valley sides, foothills of the Berwyn Mountains, loom enchantingly over this peaceful, isolated community set amid fine walking country. It is not a growing village, though. You can't build houses on slopes, we were told.

THE CLUB: A good age, formed in 1882. Since 2011, 'Llan' have been playing in the second tier Cymru Alliance, the highest level in their history. The club joined the senior ranks as recently as 2000, when promotion to the Mid Wales League was secured. Prior to that, they had featured in the Eastern Division of the Recreation Associations League, the North Shropshire League, the Oswestry & District League and the Montgomeryshire Amateur League.

THE PEOPLE: Wonderfully friendly and relaxed. I'd emailed chairman Phil Roberts a few days before the game to check a programme was being issued and he was manning the pay hut when we arrived; a lovely fella. Happily, our paths would cross again later in the holiday. All age groups were represented amongst the spectators, whose natural warmth was reflected in smiles and a willingness to chat. What a smashing place to watch your football.

THE WEATHER: Heavy rain showers punctuated by brilliant sunshine. We were either too wet or too hot!

THE GROUND: Impossible not to like the immaculate Tenllan Recreation Ground, which is on the southern edge of the village and has been shoehorned into a small parcel of land between a modern school, a road and new-ish houses. I cannot

recall seeing many narrower pitches. Chairman Phil told us it was just 50 yards wide. On the east side of the ground is a cricket-esque pavilion containing the dressing rooms, kitchen and toilets. Adjacent is a tiny kit stand with four rows of blue plastic tip-up seats. Behind, fields dotted with livestock rise steeply. Opposite, there is barely room for a single line of tree-sheltered spectators and a matching pair of dug-outs between touchline and road, the umbilical link to Oswestry. There is a little spare grass at each end but adding spectator facilities, if ever required, could prove tricky. There is a cramped car park to the north and another hill rises picturesquely beyond the school. The well-grassed pitch, which slopes down slightly to the south, is railed off but there aren't any floodlights.

THE GAME: Another poor one, I'm afraid to say, which proves you really can't have everything. Too much 'headless chicken' stuff from both teams. Penrhynoch, seeking their first win of the season, were marginally the better side and the Roosters led 2-0 shortly after the hour thanks to goals from Dylan James and Josh Hartrick, who both capitalised on shoddy defending. Substitute Sam Sefton scrambled one back near the end and in stoppage time 'Llan' went close to forcing a barely deserved equaliser. The attendance was said to be disappointing. A funeral thoughtlessly arranged to clash with the football (I say that tongue in cheek!) was blamed for the absence of several regulars.

THE PROGRAMME: Flatters to deceive. Looks impressive at first glance but it has a generic cover that is part of a glossy, static shell inside which can be found eight photocopied, game-specific pages. The cover, naturally featuring Pistyll Rhaeadr, is the same as 2012-13's, albeit with this season's details in place.

THE VERDICT: Pretty scenery, eye-catching ground and pleasant village but fairly dismal football. This set the tone for the rest of our Welsh sojourn.

04/20