

TT No.69: Mike Latham - Saturday 7 March 2015: Spar Mid Wales League Division 2: Churchstoke 3-0 Newbridge; Attendance: 40 (h/c); No admission or programme.

It was a glorious spring-like day as I journeyed through Oswestry and Welshpool with temperatures around 15 degrees and the sun shining down from a brilliant blue sky.

Destination was Churchstoke, a large village on the Welsh border situated in Powys, close to Montgomery. The football ground is located behind the local school and adjoins a community hall.

There are stunning views across valley bottoms and to three hills, Todleth Hill, Roundton Hill and Corndon Hill. The ground is bordered by allotments and some impressive houses. It was tranquil and calm and the players were laughing and joking as they warmed up on a flat and well grassed pitch for the 2-30pm start.

A handwritten sign with the fixture details Churchstoke v Newbridge, kick-off 2-30pm provided the only clue to spectators as to the match. No programmes were on sale, no refreshments offered from the hall, no attempt to defray the referee's expenses by way of a raffle. All very odd considering around 40 locals had gathered by the start and all seemed keen to watch a good game of football and support their local team.

The Churchstoke pitch is railed-off but has no facilities other than dug-outs. The only seating is provided by two bench seats either side of the halfway line.

I had my dog with me and we pottered about, watching the game from different angles. A veteran referee presided with an expert eye and excellent man management skills. Club linesmen ran the line, which is a perfectly adequate arrangement for this level of football in my opinion.

Churchstoke are newcomers to this league in 2014-15 having moved up through the Montgomery League. They won this game fairly comfortably and had a no10 who looked as though he was playing several levels below his optimum standard. With a short half-time interval, the game was over soon after 4pm with the sun still burning brightly.

I wouldn't pretend this was the greatest ground or match I'd been to recently but it was all perfectly pleasant on a lovely afternoon. I like the Mid Wales League which is excellently administered with a good, regularly updated website and covers a wide geographical area. Standards of grounds and clubs vary wildly but discovering some of the rich variance in this league adds to the joys of groundhopping.