

TT No.71: *Mike Latham* - Saturday 14 March 2015: Montgomeryshire Football League Division 2: **Llanymynech** 0-0 Morda United; No admission or programme; Attendance: 50 (h/c).

We're in border Country and my first dip into the murky waters of the Montgomeryshire Football League. Any top-of-the-table clash appeals at this time of the season and the meeting of two local rivals added to the spice. Despite the disappointing lack of goals, the game was far better in standard than I had anticipated and reflected well on a league that runs an excellent and regularly updated website.

I'd been to Llanymynech specifically before, following my daughter in an equestrian event and have passed through the village seemingly hundreds of times, located as it is on the A483 trunk road between Oswestry and Welshpool. The village once staged steeplechase meetings, the first in 1886 at Pentref Farm and a later one at Llwyn-y-groes, half-a-mile from the station and then another one at Lower House Farm, the last meeting attracting a crowd of over 5,000 in the early summer of 1940. British Eventing and other equestrian events are still staged on farmland here and judging by the number of horse-boxes that passed by as I watched the game this remains a big horsey area.

Llanymynech's a border village in many regards, parts of it in Powys, Wales, and others in Shropshire, England. It lies upon the banks of the River Vyrnwy, and the Montgomery Canal and Offa's Dyke path crosses through it. The border, so a local explained to me, runs for the most part down the centre of the village's main street, with the eastern half of the village in England and the western half in Wales. The Lion public house, now sadly close was the perfect illustration. It had three bars- two located in Shropshire and one in Montgomeryshire. When the latter was dry on Sundays it was legal to drink in the two English bars of the Lion but not in the Welsh bar.

Coming from the north via Welshpool you pass through the neighbouring village of Pant which is in England. The Pant and Llanymynech Parish Council own the King George V playing field, just down Station Road at the crossroads in the village where Llanymynech FC play.

It's a pleasant tree-lined recreational facility with the players changing in the adjacent village hall and a well-appointed bowling club also on site. The striking view in the distance is that of Llanymynech Hill, one of Wales' earliest mining sites. Copper was mined and smelted here from the late Bronze Age, and the hill above Llanymynech is crowned with an extensive Iron Age hill fort. A landscaped golf course now occupies part of the site.

A distinctive chimney also catches the eye. That's because Llanymynech is home to one of only three remaining Hoffmann kilns in the UK, and the only one to have a chimney. The kiln at Llanymynech was used for lime burning. The former limestone

quarry which fed the kiln is now the Shropshire Wildlife Trust's Llanymynech Rocks Nature Reserve.

The village lost its railway link in the mid-1960s but both the Cambrian Heritage Railways and the enthusiast-revived TVLR plan to reconnect Llanymynech with their heritage railway schemes.

A decent-sized crowd gathered on a dry but chilly afternoon. The veteran referee did remarkably well to oversee a vigorous and well contested game without administering a plethora of bookings. His firm and sensible approach should be the benchmark for many younger referees coming through the system.

Llanymynech always looked the more dangerous side and hit the woodwork in the first half as well as forcing the excellent Morda 'keeper into action on several occasions. I can't recall the visitors having a single attempt on target but they remained competitive throughout and as the game wore on the 0-0 score-line looked inevitable, I enjoyed my visit here and shall be back for more action in this league.

04/20