

TT No.71: *Mike Latham* - Sat 9 April 2016- Spar Mid Wales League Division 2: **Bettws 2-2** Aberystwyth University; Attendance: 25 (h/c); Admission: £2; No programme.

The Spar Mid Wales League has among its members some beautifully situated grounds often in remote rural locations, but few are as remote as the newcomers to the league this season, Bettws.

After dominating the Montgomeryshire League Bettws stepped up a level this year and have acquitted themselves well and on a showery and chilly April afternoon they entertained second placed Aberystwyth University.

Bettws is short for Bettws Cedewain, a small village a few miles north of Newtown in Powys, mid Wales, located also off narrow B road that runs west from the main A458 between Welshpool and Newtown.

The teams change in the local community hall in the centre of the village and go to the ground by car, on the B4389 towards Tregynon. It's a narrow road with limited parking and the actual field is rented off a local farmer and surrounded by an electronic fence to keep the sheep away.

Apart from two wooden dug-outs and a container that houses the groundkeeper's equipment there are no facilities as such and most spectators donned wellington boots and waterproof clothing as they braved a typically April afternoon that alternated spells of icy rain with bouts of warm sunshine.

The playing surface was excellent, sloping slightly towards the goal at the Bettws end and the students looked the best team for an hour, building a 2-0 lead with a penalty and a headed goal from a corner.

In the last half-hour the home side came to life and pulled back two goals, including a disputed penalty and in a frantic finish both sides had chances to win the game.

I got chatting to a couple of home officials and a retired farmer who is a regular supporter and they all made me very welcome. A couple more groundhoppers also were part of the assembled attendance- it was too small to call it a crowd.

In a lovely, quiet setting with rolling hills, woodland and sheep-clad fields all around Bettws is one of the most remote yet peaceful settings I've ever watched football and I would recommend a visit here. The Spar Mid Wales League has an excellent website which is regularly updated and the games I've seen in the league are usually well contested and played in a good spirit.

It was quite a contrast to call in at Park Hall and watch the TNS-Bala Town game in the Welsh Premier League that kicked-off at 5-15pm. TNS duly clinched their fifth successive title with a 2-0 victory and will again compete in the Champions League next season. They have upgraded their 3g pitch since my last visit and erected a

new television stand opposite the leisure centre. With the permanent stand at the far end the ground is gradually adopting more of a football ground type of feel and the full-time TNS side played some skilful, precision and technical football at a good tempo to ward off the challenge of their nearest rivals.

Yet here we were earlier in the day at level four of the Welsh pyramid watching a game on a field rented off a local framer with less than 30 people in attendance. Quite a contrast but that's the beauty of Welsh football and why I enjoy it so much.

04/20