

TT No.62: Keith Aslan - Saturday 24th November 2018; PENYDARREN BOYS & GIRLS CLUB v Ynystawe; FAW Trophy; Kick-Off: 13.24 (6 mins early wow!); Result: 7-1; Admission & programme: £3; Attendance: 59 (41 home 12 away & 6 neutral)

A recent *Channel 5* survey made Merthyr Tydfil the third worst place to live in the UK (Hackney and Tower Hamlets filled the top two spots); I don't want to be too unkind but the town is a total tip. Boarded up shops and houses, everywhere vandalised, sky high crime rates and drug taking, eloquently summed up on the internet "*If you have forgotten who you are, where you live and can hold your head high while drinking cider and smoke ten packs of fags a day, Merthyr Tydfil is the pace for you*". The town is a vision of hell but on the upside the Christmas Lights were good and I got a new Greggs tick.

Penydarren Boys & Girls (grown-ups too) Club is about a 40- minute uphill walk from the station, but considerably quicker coming back. There are buses. Here is one bit of Merthyr that is actually thriving with numerous kids' sides and the first team going places with this their debut season in the Welsh League. A brick-built stand with seats, and further cover along the side means you won't get wet here. The tea bar does hot food with old photos adorning the walls.

Penydarren reached the semi-final of this competition last season and today's result would appear to indicate their opponents from the Swansea Senior League took a bit of a pasting from their higher ranked opponents. That doesn't tell the whole story, half-time it was only 2-1 and Ynystawe could consider themselves unlucky to be losing in a very even 45 minutes. It was only in the second bit that it all went wrong and quietened down the vociferous away support. Seven of the Penydarren team have been playing in Bulgaria for the South Wales FA team in the UEFA Regions Cup with the stand out player being one Christopher Colvin-Owens. Stand out because he was completely bald and sported a full beard that players seem to think are so cool these days (they aren't). Half-time in this game he was to be found outside the changing rooms enjoying a cigarette, a proper non-league footballer. Testament to the health-giving properties of nicotine he scored two goals in the second half.

A 1.30 kick off that finished at 7 minutes past 3. Oh joy. I would like to think this was the referee's usual *modus operandi* on the time-keeping front but I have a suspicion he just wanted to get home in time to watch the Welsh Rugby International. Whatever, I was not the only groundhopper present who remarked how much better football would be if all games were like this one time-wise. One major plus was that I got out of Merthyr Tydfil a bit sooner.