

**TT No.110: Keith Aslan** - Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2020; **PONTYPRIDD TOWN** v Llantwit Major; Cymru South; Kick Off: 14.30; Result: 1-1; Admission: £4 for old people; Programme: £1; Attendance: 78 (50 home, 18 away & 10 neutral including three recognisable hoppers and a few unrecognisable ones as well).

Fourth Saturday on the trot with a rail replacement bus topping and tailing my day out, hey-ho. The line up the valleys follows the River Taff and recent storms have left their mark with fallen trees all over the place and wet stuff where it shouldn't be. Much of the town of Pontypridd itself is still under water and as if things couldn't get any worse for the poor people who've lost their homes, on Thursday Jeremy Corbyn (remember him?) paid a visit. Then it got weird as next day Prince Charles rolled up. Why is everybody coming here, with lots of flooded towns to choose from for a photo opportunity what's the attraction of Pontypridd? Does it have a good *Pizza Express*, sorry, wrong prince. You've lost your home and all your possessions, but on the up-side you get to meet royalty (and Prince Charles).

Had they still been based at their old ground on the banks of the Taff this match wouldn't have taken place. After two homeless years Pontypridd have recently moved to a brand-new state of the art residence a few miles south of the town at the University of South Wales Sports Complex. Trefforest Estate is the station for this one, a 12-minute walk away passing 'The Pottery' which doesn't look much from the outside but does a mighty fine steak and chips which set me up for the rest of the day. The Sports Complex has changed beyond all recognition since my last visit. Bridgend's old ground is still in situ at the far end but what used to be just a couple of pitches to the left of the entrance now has a massive building containing a Conference Suite, Gym, Café (shut at weekends) and a full-sized indoor football pitch. Must go back for that one ha! ha! Outside, the ground is everything a ground grader could desire, a concrete walkway round the entire pitch, floodlights and not one but two *Atcost* Stands, very welcome today as the rain rained and the wind winded. The heady combination of plastic grass and bits of vulcanised rubber made for a perfect playing surface and the whole ensemble is surrounded by the ubiquitous green chain link fence. A burger van is parked outside the ground and hot drinks can be obtained from a machine in the café which pretends it takes cash but will only give you what you want if you have a credit card.

With the Pontypridd secretary having the same public profile as Lord Lucan, for Programme reassurance I tweeted media manager, the lovely Anna, not her *twitter* handle, just a personal observation. After checking she came up with the goods but five minutes after I'd sent it, I got a big heart back from her which apparently means she liked my tweet. What's to like about asking if there's a programme? Although I'm on social media I wouldn't advise any of my many fans to follow me as I never put anything on it. I only use *twitter* to find out football details and *Facebook* to see where other people have gone. One well known

hopper who's into those strange sounding beers not only puts photos of the pubs he visits on *Facebook* but also the beer pumps. And people think I'm sad. I introduced myself to the lovely Anna at the match and thanked her for her reply to my enquiry. As I was making my way to the exit at the end of the match, she flashed me a smile and said 'See you again'. If only!

Not a bad match considering the conditions. Although the draw was a fair result a Llantwit player with nobody near him managed to shoot wide two yards out from an empty net. As some poor bloke was getting soaked up on the TV gantry filming the match the miss should be on *You tube*. If Ronnie Rosenthal takes a look, he'll feel a lot better about himself.

That's the Cymru league squared up for me as it stands. But Welsh non-league football is halfway through a major restructuring programme so who knows what next season holds. The Welsh League, currently reduced in size, will be gone, the Cymru Alliance has already disappeared and the only result of this nonsense seems to be to encourage clubs to get stands and floodlights they don't need and can't afford to stay at the same level. To paraphrase a well-known flour advert 'Graded Grounds make finer football'. Except they don't.

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