

TT No.40: Keith Aslan - Sat 3rd October 2009 (kick-off: 15.07); **INTERWOOD** v Southall; Middlesex County League Prem Division; Score: 4-0; Programme: 12 pages, free; Attendance: 7 (Home fans 2 Away fans 4 Neutrals 1).

There are three certainties in life. Death, taxes and loads of new clubs in the Middlesex League every season. The premier division is the footballing equivalent of the Bermuda triangle with at least half a dozen clubs disappearing into the ether every year, and that doesn't include the teams that are regularly thrown out for using matches to hone their Tai-Kwondo skills. For the programme chasing groundhopper the league is pretty much a heaven on earth with the vital pieces of paper turning up at venues hitherto programme free.

From the tranche of newcomers, I chose Interwood for my Saturday entertainment. The senior side has only been formed for a few months but the junior section has been going for 40 years. Formed in 1970 by Terry Gibson's Dad, any club that can boast Terry Gibson, Les Sealey and Terry Hurlock in its original line up gets much respect from me.

The tube journey from Stamford Brook to Fairlop is never going to feature in "Great Railway Journeys of the World" but it makes a pleasant change not to have to worry about train timetables and to arrive at my destination barely 70 minutes after leaving home.

Snaresbrook Interwood (the Snaresbrook was added for political reasons and dropped straight away) play at Elmbridge Country Club, right out of Fairlop Station and just keep walking for a mile and a half. On the way you pass the mecca of Essex Intermediate football where Manford Way, Leytonstone United and Westhamians all play within a Rory Delap throw of each other. I popped into the latter to obtain a programme for their local derby with Frenford Senior which was an early kick off.

Elmbridge has a very pleasant bar with a huge adjoining function room. Having acquired my programme from Trevor Bailey, the friendly manager, trainer, programme editor etc. I settled down for some post-match refreshments with one of the friendliest barmaids I have ever had the pleasure of conversing with. It is most Groundhoppers dream to find a young lady who will talk to them AND actually give the appearance of being interested in what they have to say. Yes, Interwood is the place to go.

I somewhat reluctantly left the bar at 2.55pm to see both sides out on the pitch and ready to go and here comes the only downside to the day. Step forward Mr. D. Thomas who bought his linesmen out at 3.02pm and after his pre match preparations, didn't get the game underway until 3.07pm. Surely one of the basic requirements of a referee is timekeeping. How can you be trusted to time a football match if you can't start it within seven minutes of the kick off time. What was the problem? Did the referee really find it impossible to start before 3.07pm?

Does Mr. D Thomas live his life this way? Is he 7 minutes late for work every day, does he turn up for appointments 7 minutes late, arrive for trains 7 minutes late? I think not, so why does he consider a football match not worth a punctual start? Ironically, he was one of the best referees I have seen this season, he clearly enjoys what he does and from beginning to end he displayed common sense in every aspect of his job apart from timekeeping.

The game was entertaining enough with the four-nil score-line for the home side being just about right and the game finished at 4.59pm! I hope that Interwood last the distance, they appear to have got things right both on and off the field and with their gregarious barmaid, how can they fail? Another terrific day out, but then again, aren't they all?

06/20