

TT No.154: Keith Aslan - Sat 15th January, KO 14.06; **Elstow Abbey** v Stevington; Beds County League Div. 2; Result: 6-0; Admission: Free; Programme: £1; Att: 23 (19 home, 3 away & 1 neutral).

Elstow is a pleasant village. It's 50-minutes' walk to the south of Bedford station. Although almost surrounded by housing estates it manages to retain its rustic ambiance and it was here that John Bunyon spent most of his life with his name everywhere in the village. His most famous work, "Pilgrims Progress" is one of those books everyone has heard of and nobody has read. The abbey is a very imposing structure that dominates its surrounds with a museum next to it (closed for the winter).

Elstow Abbey Football Club is run by a very enthusiastic bunch who showed me great hospitality and were much impressed that I'd travelled from London to watch them. Clearly groundhoppers are a new concept to them. They go to town with their programme, 16 pages, glossy, with everything you could want from your matchday publication. Clearly a labour of love, and to my knowledge, the only issuers in the lower divisions of the Bedfordshire League. It was from this I learnt that the clubs main claim to fame is that it was here that football legend Barry Fry began his career.

Stevington had the unusual tactic of fielding a team whose average age looked around the 40 mark, hardly a match winning strategy. A case of middle-aged men against boys with the boys having the upper hand. Also, three Stevington players appeared to share the same dietician as Eamon Holmes.

Like most games I attend this one kicked off late with the reason why being known only to the referee. However, he did atone by only playing 45 minutes each way in spite of numerous stoppages. He did have a very good game but really should try to improve his punctuality!

With half time approaching and Elstow 2-0 up, one of their players committed a particularly spiteful foul to which the recipient dispensed instant justice. After the ensuing semi-fracas had abated the original miscreant was yellow carded and the Stevington vigilante sent off to nobody's surprise but his own. Playing with 10 men for the second half, this was always going to be an exercise in keeping the score down, which was partially successful. At the end of the game everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves which is what it's all about.