

TT No.149: Keith Aslan - Sat January 21st 2012; **CADBURY ATHLETIC** v Walsall Wood; Smedley Crook Cup; KO: 13.32; Result: 3-2aet; Admission: £4; Programme: £1; Attendance: 46 (31 home 6 away 11 neutral).

There aren't many football grounds, if any, that compare to Cadbury's. It is untroubled by the modern world, a piece of Victoriana that would have any lover of football architecture purring with delight. Alas lack of floodlights means they have to play their home games at Alvechurch, a situation that only appears to be able to be remedied if they get relegated. But today is the cup whose rules don't include compulsory illumination, so a rare chance to enjoy football as our forebears would have enjoyed it.

Easy to get to, a 20- minute service London to Birmingham, a 10-minute service Birmingham to Bourneville and a five-minute walk (follow the signs to "Cadbury World" which is adjacent). With the game in some doubt I arrived very early in Birmingham to facilitate Plan B, if necessary. A call to the ultra-helpful John Peckham, chairman and founder, confirmed the game was on so I had two hours for sightseeing in England's 'second city'.

I've been to Brum many times before of course, but always just travelling between the station and various bus stops, but this was the first occasion I've had to really explore the location. All I can say is it must be the only place in the galaxy that makes Swindon look like Disneyland.

As one approaches the ground, the huge Victorian Clubhouse knocks you sideways. Understandably is a protected building which is why there is a problem with floodlights. Next to the clubhouse is a high bank of terracing (and you don't see much of that at non-league grounds these days) while running along almost the complete length of the touchline is another bank of terracing. I'm not very good at descriptive writing, you'll just have to see this ground for yourselves. (They might be at home in the next round of the cup?).

The day was complete with an excellent programme with a photograph of the ground in its heyday on the front cover. The massive bank of terracing next to the clubhouse is full which must have been an awesome sight. Unfortunately, the woefully inadequate print run of 13 proved unlucky for anyone arriving less than 40 minutes before the kick off leaving most of the crowd, including some groundhoppers, paperless.

Low flying (they are bottom of the Midland Comb) Walsall Wood found themselves in the unusual position of being 2-0 up at half time. Cadbury dominated the second half and only some top notch saves from the Wood's goalkeeper sent the game into extra time. Cadburys scored early doors in the added period and although Walsall gave it a good go, they never looked likely to force penalties.

I can't recommend this ground highly enough. You won't have seen anything like it anywhere else. The trip did however pose one question: Do referees get paid by the hour? If they don't, I can think of no logical reason why Mr. R. Crook should drag out 2 hours of football to make it last 2 hours 35 minutes!

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