

TT No. 163: Keith Aslan - Sat 4th May 2013; **Spencer Boys** v Blackrock; Gwent County Division 2; K-O: 15.02; Result: 3-2; Admission/Programme: Free; Attendance: 27 (20 home 6 away 1 neutral).

Not for the first time I awoke on a Saturday morning intending to go to one place and ended up somewhere completely different. Many thanks to the Wilstead manager who showed me a great kindness in phoning to say their game had been called off due to a no show from the opposition, Bedford Hatters. So South Wales it was then!

Spencer Boys play in Ringland, a suburb of Newport. Plenty of buses from the bus station 8a/b/c go a variety of routes, but all end up at the Ringland Circle from where the ground is visible less than 100 yards from the bus stop.

Ringland is one of those sixties housing developments that was to be the blueprint for future generations, but like so many others, something went horribly wrong in the intervening years and the place now looks like a scene from a "Mad Max" film. It has one of the highest crime rates in Wales; the tower blocks are in a state of disrepair; barbed wire is everywhere and the shopping precinct in the middle is almost deserted with most of the shops long since boarded up. On the plus side, one of the few remaining still open, is a Greggs, so it isn't all bad. It is also near enough to the ground to get a half time cup of tea.

Considering how close the ground is to the Ringland Centre, its situation is surprisingly pleasant. Fully railed off, it has grass banking on three sides, with a wood along the top of one side. Less than a mile away you can see the imposing "Celtic Manor", a luxury hotel and golf course (the venue for the Ryder cup a couple of years ago).

Programme issuing is a league rule in the Gwent County and, although most clubs comply, you can have your work cut out trying to find one. The Spencer secretary is the man you need to seek out for your paper here. I asked a player about programmes and would have probably got a more lucid response if I'd asked him to explain the theory of Quantum Physics.

The game was entertaining and hard fought (at one stage, literally, as a red card testified) with the homesters just shading it by the odd goal in five. There is a saying in football that nobody comes to watch the referee, but I would certainly go to a match if I knew this guy was going to be in charge!