

TT No.47: Mike Latham - Sat 14 December 2014: Fife & Lothians Cup Rd 2: **Dalkeith Thistle** 1-1 Newtongrange Star (Dalkeith won 3-2 on free-kicks taken from the penalty mark); Attendance: 160 (h/c); Admission: £5; Raffle ticket: £1; No Programme; Pie and Bovril: £2; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

It had been mild all week in Scotland but the forecasters were predicting heavy rain and strong winds spreading from the west during the day; I followed their advice and was glad I did so as this game finished just as the worst of the weather was arriving. Many games in the West Juniors either failed to start or were abandoned and even Scottish League fixtures at Annan and Queen of the South perished due to the strong winds.

The journey over from Moffat, where the excellent Cafe Ariete is gearing up for Christmas, was interesting with huge lakes on many parts of the road. The brewery at Broughton was sadly closed, thus thwarting my plans to invest in a case of Greenmantle; they are open Monday-Friday but closed on Saturdays which I fail to understand.

Dalkeith is situated south-east of Edinburgh and is the former county town of Midlothian. The town has a long history and has many prominent buildings and some striking residential properties. The football ground is part of King's Park which also accommodates the town's rugby club. I was reminded of long-ago university days when I discovered that Gladstone started his campaign to become British Prime Minister here in 1879; I once played in the same university football team as one of his descendants. That seems a long time ago.

This cup-tie pitted Dalkeith, from the second tier of the East Juniors against Newtongrange Star (or 'Nitten' as they are known) who are in the top tier. The neighbouring teams have a long and largely friendly rivalry and many Nitten supporters travelled the short distance to help swell the gate. But one local told me that Dalkeith's 3-2 defeat against Star in the 1971 Junior Cup semi-final still rankles and the tie was certainly competitive with some fearsome challenges flying in.

Scottish referees, as I have often said, are excellent. Today's official, Evan Cairns, controlled the game really well, handling a highly charged local cup-tie effortlessly with the help of two club linesmen who simply signalled 'ins and outs.'

The ground is well maintained and a credit to the home club. A newly-constructed pavilion incorporating a very good pie hut dominates the far side and the near-side terrace has the benefit of a small cover. Two Collie dogs in the charge of their owner watched the action intently, following the ball with a keen and unwavering eye.

Starting at 1-30pm in reasonable conditions, the cup-tie was certainly fiercely fought with many meaty challenges flying in, but still played in a good spirit.

Chances were few and far between and the first-half ended goal-less. The town's rugby team commenced a first-team game on an adjoining pitch slightly later and so King's Park was a hive of activity.

As the wind grew in strength and the promised rains arrived conditions became more difficult in the second half, especially as the light was fading. The home side took the lead from a penalty ten minutes after the resumption with Nitten equalising in the dying minutes of the game. So, we went straight away to the wonderfully-titled 'free-kicks from the penalty mark' in the gloaming; the home side prevailing 3-2. Their joy was unconfined- those memories of 1971 are deeper than I realised.

04/20