

TT No.67: Keith Aslan - Sat 8th February 2014; **Hounslow Wanderers** v Kensington Dragons; Middlesex League Prem; Kick-Off: 15.01; Result: 2-3; Admission: Free; Programme: £1; Att: 15 (8 home, 0 away & 7 neutral).

And so, the rain continues. It has been the wettest start to a year since, well since the last time it rained a lot which was about three years ago. For a country obsessed with the weather we don't handle the stuff very well. People keep coming up with crackpot theories about the rain, a punishment from god, or even more ludicrous, global warming, although anybody surprised when it rains a lot in England clearly hasn't been paying attention. It makes the news headlines every night with never ending film of the floods in Somerset (last time it was Tewksbury, flooding is only news when it happens in the south of England). Floods on the Somerset flood plain! Hold the front page.

Non-league football doesn't do rain very well, apparently you can't play in mud, and with the fixture list decimated I had seen my last four non-league games on artificial pitches. Decided to try for a grass one this weekend but a couple of calls quickly put the kybosh on that plan, so it is was back to the trusted plastic and the equally trusted Middlesex League.

Hounslow Wanderers play next to Hayes & Yeading FC's ground, or it will be if it ever gets finished. I had a good look round what is currently a building site and Conference football is a long way off. On the plus side the pitch is immaculate. Just paint a few white lines and you're good to go. Spectator accommodation is still a good way off, not a good sign for a club due to move in two seasons ago.

This area always strikes me as very remote, no houses, and the only approach is down one long road through an industrial estate. No convenient transport, Southall station is in the same road as the ground, but Beaconsfield Avenue is bisected by the grand union canal and nobody has thought to build a bridge across. On the way from the bus stop you pass the old Technicolour ground. Clubhouse now an educational facility and the site of the ground still verdant but no longer used for football (used to disappoint me that their programmes were always in black and white). Next door is a newly built cycle track, a little gem for the hungry hopper, with the clubhouse offering hot drinks for ten shillings a go and man-sized rolls at fourteen 'bob' (for youngsters that's 50p and 70p). These are the only refreshments available anywhere in the vicinity of the ground and is about a 6-minute walk away. It was full of young fit men (and some rather attractive women) with bulging leg muscles, clad in lycra. Needless to say, I blended in very well.

Now the question everybody will be asking is - is Hounslow Wanderers ground technically the same one as Northolt Saints (among others) used to play at? I can answer that with an emphatic don't know. A long time since I was last there, with everything changed, I am inclined to think it doesn't overlap, with the old ground

being further over on the right. But I don't really know. I am counting it as a new ground and that's all that matters.

Hounslow Wanderers ground is used by Hayes and Yeading FC for their reserve games where you are not allowed inside the wire fence, but no problems in the Middlesex County League. Today the home side were entertaining Kensington Dragons, one defeat all season and top of the league. This really was the proverbial game of two halves. The first was tedious and shapeless with the wind winning hands down. The second 49 minutes was a thrill a minute rollercoaster containing all the goals with the Dragons getting the winning goal 5 minutes from the end, a bit harsh on Hounslow, but that's football. They didn't do themselves any favours with their bench constantly haranguing the referee for every decision that didn't go their way. He quite rightly eventually sent one of them off, a person whose entire vocabulary seemed to be "You're having a shocker ref" which he constantly shouted throughout the match for no apparent reason. For the record the referee had a very good game in what was difficult circumstances and the only one to have a "shocker" was mouthy!

Another joyful trawl in my local league, but I hope we get more games on next week, I'm running out of that heady combination of plastic and programme.

04/20