

TT No.6: Keith Aslan - Sat 30th August 2014; **Ashby Ivanhoe** v East Midlands Counties League; Kick-Off: 15.00; Result: 5-1; Admission: £3; Programme: £1; Attendance: 82 (61 home 18 away 3 neutral).

New to the East Midlands League, Ashby Ivanhoe play in the delightful town of Ashby de la Zouch which has a half hourly bus service from Leicester. At a return fare of £6.20p nobody could accuse "Arriva Midlands" of not giving value for money with the 17- mile journey taking 1hr 20 minutes. If you've ever wanted to travel down every street in Coalville this is the bus for you. On arrival I ventured off the high street down Mill lane Mews (as delightful as it sounds) where the Olde Worlde tea shop sold the most magnificent homemade flap jacks so filling I didn't even get to tick off the local Greggs.

Ashby play on the outskirts of town, about a 25-minute stroll from the High street. A new ground, the best compliment I can pay is that it doesn't look it, with the stand and barriers made of wood, a far more aesthetically pleasing material than iron and concrete. All the infrastructure is behind the near goal. The wooden stand is separated from the pitch by the goal net and the high net used to capture wayward shots (vital at this ground where the shooting was about as accurate as Garry Barlow's tax returns).

Behind the stand is the bar and food hatch. An old building that has been completely revamped, and a joyful venue to chill out pre match, stuffing my face while enjoying on the big screen Manchester United's latest bold (but unsuccessful) bid to win a game of football. There was a sign on one of the doors leading from the bar which proudly proclaimed "The new home for local football" and underneath "Ladies Toilet". All very strange! Next door is the tannoy announcer's hut and next to that are the portacabins that double as the changing rooms. All in all, the N.F.U. ground (and how many grounds are named after a trade union?) is a very pleasant place to watch football and looks just like a football ground at this level should look like. The programme says that a seated stand and floodlights are in the offing, but there is no sign of them yet.

The football club is named after Sir Ivanhoe who was apparently pretty big round these parts. His main claim to fame is that he is the only medieval knight to have a TV series devoted to him. If you are as ancient as I am then Ivanhoe would have been an integral part of your weekend with versatile thespian Roger Moore getting his far starring role as Ivanhoe, a brave knight who went around doing good deeds and killing people with his sword.

Present at today's game was the daughter of the late Jeff Astle who used to be president of Ashby Ivanhoe. She wrote a very moving article in the programme about his early death at the age of 59 due, to brain damage caused by continually heading a football. The coroner officially recorded an industrial death and the FA immediately announced they were going to carry out a 10-year survey on the

effects to the brain of heading a football. Of course, they never did. In my opinion Jeff was just very, very unlucky.

The first half was very even with the sides going in at half time at 1-1. The home side ran away with it in the second half. Ashby's manager had been complaining about their 5-0 surrender to Stapenhill in their previous match and I would imagine he was quite happy with the response today.

Back on the bus I was again able to enjoy every street in Coalville, this time from the opposite direction. On arrival at Leicester, the Gay Pride Festival was starting to wind down and the streets were full of people proud of liking their vice versa. Couldn't help thinking it was fortunate the Leicester v Arsenal match had been put back to Sunday otherwise there might have been a bit of a culture clash!

04/20