

**TT No.25: Keith Aslan** - Sat 14th November 2015; **Darlaston Town 1874** v Hawkes Mill Sports; Birmingham Vase; Kick-Off: 12.59; Result: 2-1; Admn: (+ raffle ticket): £3; Programme: £1; Attendance: 48 (44 home, 3 away & 1 neutral).

When I saw the 1 o'clock kick off this was the only destination for me today. Quite why it was so early nobody knows given that there is no extra time in the Birmingham Vase. Having been to Darlaston at the end of last season at their shared ground with Red Star Alma, a revisit to this wonderful club went straight to the top of my to do list now they have moved 100 yards down the road into their own ground at the Bentley Pavilion. Two years ago, there was no team, no ground, and no club but thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of a large band of officials and supporters, particularly Chairman Neil Chambers, they have achieved one promotion, and built themselves a new ground with bar facilities. This is what can be achieved by real football fans, and the name of Darlaston Town lives on. Two weeks ago, with it already vandalised beyond repair, the local youths finished off their magnificent old ground by burning down the wooden stand. Hard to believe this scum are from the same planet as the people running the football club.

If you're up this way take a look round Birmingham New Streets fantastic new station. Although the city is an anathema to me, I have to admit Network rail have excelled themselves (and you will never see that sentence again from me). The ground is easy to get to by public transport with buses every few minutes from Walsall or Wolverhampton, route 529, and a 7-minute walk from the bus stop. Food and drinks already on the go when I arrived and the clubhouse was a welcome respite from the horrendous weather with the Black Country living up to its name. There was no hiding place during the match and I got a soaking, but as I always say, if you don't want to get wet you are doing the wrong hobby! This was the tail end of Britain's first named hurricane, although down on the Kentish Riviera 'Abigale' was no more than a stiff breeze. I hope when they get to the letter 'M' they name it Michael after hurricane expert Michael Fish, the only weather forecaster to feature in an Olympic Games Opening Ceremony.

Given that they get quite a few groundhoppers, I found it slightly disconcerting that I was well remembered and everyone seemed impressed that I had travelled so far to watch the game. Not as impressed as I was with the programme editor who travels to all their games from his home in Four Crosses, Mid-Wales. Today's opponents were from the Coventry and District league and they play at Hawkes Mill Social Club which is owned by former footballer LLoyd McGrath who used to play for Coventry City when they were good. In spite of the wide gap in status there wasn't much to choose between the two teams. 2-0 down, Hawkes Mill pulled a goal back with 10 minutes to go which was the signal for Darlaston to see the game out with an inventive display of top of the range timewasting. The referee did what all referees do in such circumstances and made some nifty manoeuvres with his watch to indicate he was adding the time on. I wonder if anybody apart from

me has noticed that this never makes any difference? The home side also had two goals disallowed for offside which surprisingly they disagreed with, to the extent that the 'scorer' of the second one got booked for suggesting to the referee he didn't know what he was doing. Note to player, it was the linesman who gave the offside, if you're going to slag off the officials, make sure you get the right one!

I have nothing but admiration for everyone connected with Darlaston Town 1874, may they prosper.

04/20