

TT No.49: Keith Aslan - Sat 23rd January 2016; **Colden Common** v Fleetlands; Hampshire Senior Division; Kick-Off: 14.08; Result: 3-3; Admission: Free; Programme: £1; Attendance: 21 (16 home, 4 away & 1 neutral).

There's only one team in Hampshire for paper fetishists and it is a long time ago since I last visited Colden Common. I remember absolutely nothing about the game but the superb programme sticks out in the memory. The quality hasn't dropped and the best part of 25 years on, another terrific issue with the editor cum secretary cum linesman, Ian Steele, producing another cracker. He's being doing them every season for the past 30 plus years, a labour of love, and this in a league where programmes are about as rare as an Aston Villa victory.

Colden Common is a village between Winchester and Eastleigh, and for public transport junkies it is the latter station you need to go to. Although only every two hours the X9 timetable fits in perfectly with a 2 o'clock kick off, but not one at 8 minutes past which is when today's match finally got going. Having been forced to leave their village green headquarters due to changing room issues (not particularly serious ones as they played their first five games back there, presumably due to cricketing conflicts) they aim to return permanently. Not that there's anything wrong with the current set up. Located on the outskirts of town in a country park, it has all the requisite new facilities including the all-important hall to serve hot drinks, set in glorious countryside. But its remoteness is the problem for the club. When they played in the centre of the village, everybody knew they were there and the club maintained a high profile. Attendances have suffered since the move and I wish them well in their attempt to return. Also, the old ground was right next to the village pub which apparently helped to attract players! No matter what the weather brings, one thing the "Commoners" won't need to worry about is fixture congestion, having whipped through their first 8 games, almost a quarter of the season's fixtures, by the end of August.

Colden Common's most famous son is Steve Guppy who began his career playing here, scoring in the equivalent fixture in 1995. "Gupps" played for a number of clubs, most notably Leicester City and Celtic and was inexplicably a full international. Who will ever forget his solitary appearance in a friendly against Belgium during England's "Desperation Years" (between 1970 and 2016)? Today his first club are rooted to the bottom of the Hampshire League with seven points, although why, this is beyond me judging by today's match. They were full value for their point in a scintillating game of football and they won't be bottom much longer if they can play like this on a regular basis. Great match, fantastic programme, what more could you want from an afternoon? Well just one thing actually, a 2 o'clock kick off.

The referee, who looked about 14, is apparently a graduate of something called the 'F.A. National Young Referee Development Programme' with punctuality obviously not on the curriculum. With two o'clock almost upon us and both teams

out on the pitch, the referee was standing outside the changing rooms gazing wistfully at the winter sun setting behind the trees, seemingly oblivious to the fact there should be a football match starting in which he had a major role to play. In a futile attempt to stir him into action I innocently asked him what time the game was kicking off. The reply "2 o'clock in theory". Oh, so advertised kick off times are only a theory, that's all right then. I didn't hear the final whistle as I was limping as fast as my dodgy knees would carry me back to the bus stop. Kick off times may be theoretical but bus timetables are not. Thanks ref.

04/20