

TT No.22: *Keith Aslan* - Sat 7th January 2017; **Bildeston Rangers** v Haughley United; Suffolk & Ipswich League Bob Coleman Cup 3rd Round; Kick-Off: 13.33; Result: 0-7; Admission & Programme: Free; Attendance: 36 (18 home, 10 away & 8 neutral).

It's cup weekend so congratulations go to Manchester United for their 55th consecutive live televised FA Cup match, a magnificent record stretching back to January 2005 and proof of the old adage (at least as far as the TV companies are concerned) that you can't have too much of a bad thing. Saturday lunchtime, a Man. United X1 at home to Reading, and to think some people say the cup has lost its romance! It's knock-out action for me as well but of the more prosaic 'Bob Coleman' variety, a competition at least clubs actually want to win and put out their strongest sides.

Bildeston is a delightful village in the middle of the glorious Suffolk countryside, the sort of place I would not have heard of, never mind visit, if it wasn't for this wonderful hobby. Two intrepid hoppers did this one by public transport, there is a bus back to Ipswich at 16.44, but a taxi is required to get here unless you arrive at 9.30 in the morning. I am once again indebted to the now sadly Ben-less Len for a lift from Stowmarket, the nearest railhead. Pre-match refreshments were enjoyed at the 'Kings Head' in the village centre in which we were immediately identified by one football savvy drinker as "Grasshoppers" Close! A pub that has a notice reading 'Any unattended children will be sold as slaves' is o.k. in my book. The ground is almost a mile outside the village down a narrow track and is in the proverbial 'middle of nowhere' with not a house to be seen. It has a changing room block built in 1998 which contains a kitchen which alas wasn't in use today. Standing outside the building offers a raised view of the match and the surrounding countryside. If top of the range facilities like dugouts and a rope are your bag then this ground won't be for you, but for a scenic backdrop to a match you won't find many places to rival Bildeston. Not usual issuers they produced a programme today in honour of their illustrious (everything is relative) opponents.

Haughley, from two divisions higher, cruised to an expected victory, but Bildeston kept going 'till the end and were unfortunate that the one 'goal' they did score was chalked off as it entered through a hole in the net requiring lengthy surgery to repair. While referees are usually responsible for late starts, the man in black was innocent over this one with Haughley refusing to come out of the changing room and totally ignoring the refs. increasing loud banging. Given the changing room doors only open outwards there isn't much else Toby Cousins could have done other than to get an axe and enact the poster for "The Shining". It would be nice for the league to take some action against the tardy miscreants but of course they won't. Punctuality seems to be a thing of the past.

At the risk of repeating myself, what a wonderful way to spend a Saturday.

