

TT No.38: *Keith Aslan* - Saturday 7th October 2017; **COVENTRY ALVIS** v Littleton; Midland League Division 1; Kick-Off: 14.59; Result: 0-4; Admission: £4; Programme: £1; Attendance: 52 (40 home, 9 away, 3 neutral)

Netball: COVENTRY ALVIS v Offchurch; Coventry & Warwickshire Netball League Division 3; Tip off 14.59; Result: 47-52; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 12, all home.

I've been to a lot of grounds in Coventry which is why I thought I'd already done this one. However, thanks go to the many professional groundhoppers who have much more idea of where I've been than I have, who put me right and told me a visit would be required to complete the top two divisions of the Midland League. Easy to get to for the carless with the number 9 offering a half hourly door to door service from the station. For the athletic Grounhopper (surely an oxymoron) the ground would be about an hour's walk on the southern extremity of the city with fields rather than buildings offering a backdrop to the match.

Nice setting, enclosed, railed, floodlit with an *Atcost* stand to one side of the dugouts and a much larger and older covered stand to the other. The clubhouse serves hot drinks and rolls consumed while 'enjoying' the high-octane thrills of Barnet's goalless draw with Coventry which in view of the location received a more attentive audience than it would have done elsewhere in the country. The home club are nicknamed 'The Tankmen' due to the fact Alvis make armoured vehicles and not because they get tanked every week, which at the moment, they do. Bottom of the table with only two wins, a tally they never looked like adding to today and Littleton are unlikely to have an easier afternoon, scoring a couple of goals in each half. It's going to be a long hard season for the home side. The club have been going since 1928 and have played at a number of grounds in Coventry, including the Butts Arena where Coventry United are currently located. They are one of the few teams to have kept playing throughout the 2nd World War, probably because they didn't lose any players as tank building must have been a reserved occupation. Alvis have been climbing up the pyramid of late, playing their football in the Coventry Alliance as recently as 2011.

Spookily the adjacent netball match tipped off within two seconds of the footy which presented me with a bit of a dilemma and I found it difficult to concentrate on the game, being constantly distracted by the football. The 'Tankgirls' also lost, but this one was much closer. They could teach footballers a thing or two about water consumption. As I'm sure everyone knows, netball is divided into four 15minute quarters, and at the first break there was a rush to tip H2O down their throats in alarming quantity's. My Broadstairs dacha is on a water meter and if I drunk as much as them, I'd be destitute. They've just played a quarter of an hour of a non-contact sport where running is penalised. It's a cold day with a constant drizzle so who tells them they need to stave off dehydration by knocking back water at every opportunity? The footballers were doing the same thing and at one

stage I was in grave danger of being knocked out by flying water bottles coming at me from two directions. Maybe throwing plastic bottles around is part of the water drinking experience. Why don't they just put a trough by the side of the pitch?

Alvis is hopper friendly, don't be put off by the secretary's brusque recorded phone message saying he doesn't reply to voicemails. A text message elicits a very helpful response and there was a programme with my name on it waiting for me on arrival. The club bemoans the fact travellers visit it from all over the country but the locals don't want to know. I wish them well but I'm afraid this is the way of things these days. And the icing on the gateaux, the match finished at 4.46pm.

04/20