

TT No.54: *Keith Aslan* -Saturday November 11th 2017; **CHURCH STRETTON** v F.C. Darlaston; West Midlands League Division 2; Kick-Off: 14.01; Result: 3-0; Admission: Free; Programme: 50p; Attendance: 46 (20 home, 9 away & 17 neutral)

The great, the good and the gormless of groundhopping glitterati, were attracted to this one, something to do with a first ever bit of paper I believe coupled with the fact that Church Stretton is a pleasant venue for a day out and the station is a five-minute walk from the ground making it very popular with the carless contingent. The ground is pretty basic, two sides railed sums it up although the smart changing room block and tea room are new builds this year. Although not much to look at where it scores with the aesthete is the setting, a glorious backdrop of the 'Long Myndd' and Shropshire Hills. The surroundings are designated 'an area of outstanding beauty'. If you like walking, get here early, if you like drinking get here early as well, with the neutrals today making a sizeable contribution to the local pub. trade. It's a very wealthy town making the Big Issue seller in the High Street look somewhat incongruous. With beverages available at the ground, for food go to the café just a one-minute walk away. I had a major steak diner, excellent.

There are some strange happenings in the black country on the non-league football front. I saw West Bromwich United's final game last season. They'd just got promotion and were talking optimistically about the future. 3 weeks later the manager did a runner to Darlaston 1884, took all the players with him and West Brom. folded. Darlaston FC was then formed (a breakaway club from a breakaway club!) by the chairman, programme editor and a couple of supporters. They had a ready-made team with the personnel that became surplus to requirements at 1884. The official reason for the formation of the new club was they wanted to play nearer to their old home in Darlaston. Yes, it is nearer than 1884's ground, by my reckoning about 300 yards closer! I think there's a bit more to the breakaway than that

Neither side have started particularly well with two wins a piece is all they had to show for their efforts prior to kick off. It turned out to be a very comfortable win for the home side. Disappointingly there were a few goals with virtually every hopper hoping for a 0-0 as one of our number has to return if he doesn't get a goal and becomes somewhat more agitated the longer a match continues, without one. Watching him jump up and down is usually more entertaining than the match itself but alas it was not to be this afternoon.

My day started with two bus rides as the line was shut due to 'emergency engineering works'. No, it wasn't, they must think I was born yesterday. Network Rail took the track up overnight as they often do for no reason, and didn't leave themselves enough time to put it back. No emergency, the correct word is 'over-

running'. Fair play they got the transport sorted out quickly, rail replacement bus to Ramsgate, all change onto another bus to Minster and the train was ready and waiting to go, only arriving 6 minutes late into London. But here's the problem, the bus left Margate and Broadstairs 15 minutes before the train. I was very lucky that I got to the station early but most people missed it and almost everyone else on the bus had been hanging around for an hour after making for the previous train. This really isn't very good, why can't they just leave the track alone. The 'emergency' engineering works were all cleared up on my return for an uneventful journey back to my country dacha.

04/20