

**TT No.116: Keith Aslan** - Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019; **COPTHORNE** v Westfield; Southern Combination (nee Sussex County) Division 2; Kick-Off: 13.59; Result: 1-2; Admission: Free; Programme: £1; Attendance: 18 (12 home, 0 away & 6 neutral).

Six trains, all six late, the railways in meltdown because there was a gentle zephyr blowing across the Kentish hop fields. Yes, it was the wrong kind of wind and unsafe to travel at more than 50 miles an hour apparently. They enforced speed limit produced pandemonium everywhere particularly at Ashford International with passengers (when things go wrong it's always 'passengers') wondering why if it was dangerous for trains to travel more than 50 miles an hour in the wind, how comes Eurostar's were zipping through the station at over 140?

Today I followed in the footsteps of the sublime Brian Buck to finish off the Sussex County League again. On his visit there was a problem with the programmes. I am acquainted with the 'concerned hopper' and am happy to report a copy arrived through his letterbox the following Tuesday. Much kudos to the club for that. Incidentally I'm still waiting for a reply to the stamp addressed envelope I sent the Middlesex League Secretary in December regarding Lampton Park's failure to issue. Perhaps it got lost in the post. No paper problems today with the usual top-quality issue from the 'JMA programmes' stable. They issue for a number of teams in the area, a southern version of Barnes Print. Not much happening at the ground but hot drinks were available throughout. The pavilion was holding a children's disco so out of bounds. The pitch was roped off and.... well that's about it really, but you could watch the game unaffected by the persistent drizzle from the pavilion overhang. A rural setting with a good view of the planes landing at nearby Gatwick Airport, unlike the trains they seemed to be unaffected by the wind. This is Copthorne's third game back in the village after a lengthy spell away while the pitch was being reseeded. With most leagues reverting to 3 o'clock kick offs in February or March at the latest, the Sussex County hang on to the early starts until the clocks go forward, much appreciated by the travelling contingent. The 48 that attended Brian's game had decreased to 18 for this one, probably due to the weather. I managed to get the right bus from Three Bridges station to the match with the drivers in both directions somehow spot on with their timekeeping in spite of the wind! A ridiculous £5 return which, unlike everybody else, I had to pay.

Not the best game I've ever seen with all the goals coming in the last 10 minutes. My record of sending's off came to an end with a promising confrontation between the Westfield centre forward and the Copthorne goalkeeper being disappointingly broken up by team mates before the fisticuffs could start. Copthorne started the day in pole position but were overtaken by Rustington who are certain to win the league having five games in hand. Nobody is likely to get promoted, the ground graders will see to that.

Trains home still in complete chaos because of the strong breeze. However, thanks to getting a late running train from Three Bridges I only arrived back at my country dacha 15 minutes later than anticipated. What a way to run a railway.

04/20