

TT No. 131: Keith Aslan - Saturday 13th April 2019; Old Carthusians v Old Meadonians; **AFA Senior Cup Final @ THE BANK OF ENGLAND SPORTS GROUND**; Kick Off: 14.59; Result 3-1 to Old Carthusians a.e.t. (score after 101 minutes 1-1); Admission: Free; Programme: Donation; Attendance: 212 (90 O.C.; 70 O.M & 52 neutral incl. 3 hoppers).

The facilities at the Bank of England Sports Ground in Roehampton are second to none, a restaurant which I took full advantage of and bar showing the lunchtime footie. Indoor swimming pool and Gym (I gave them a miss), a cricket pitch, various football pitches, and a raft of grass tennis courts where the Wimbledon qualifiers are held each year. The main football ground has a huge piece of Victorian architecture at the top of the bank behind one goal giving the feel of a country estate to the set up. While fiscal constraints mean many of these Sports Grounds are being sold off for housing, and in this area the land is worth a large fortune, the Bank of England don't seem to have any money problems for some reason!

Barnes is the station for this one followed by an interesting 23-minute walk. First bit is across Barnes Common, then past the Priory Clinic, a detox establishment for the rich and famous. Eric Clapton, Robbie Williams, and Amy Winehouse are just a three of a long line of inmates while football is well represented by George Best, Paul Gascoigne and Arsenal's favourite wino, Tony Adams. A bit of football trivia for you, Adams can claim a unique record, he is the only player in the history of the Premier League to be substituted for being drunk. Apparently, nobody noticed before he went on the pitch. Next door to the clinic is the new headquarters of the Lawn Tennis Association where the next generation of plucky English no hoppers are being trained.

When I had my meal I wittily asked if I would get a discount for using the Bank's product as payment. The girl on the till obviously didn't have a sense of humour and gave me a look that I've seen many times before that said 'how did this person get past security?' While I was chomping away fellow hopper Harlow Dave was watching Tottenham on the TV. He was making a rare trip by public transport as his car was misbehaving and he had the additional joy of my company back into London.

The game was frisky, or dirty depending on your viewpoint, let's just say the pre-match 'respect' handshakes weren't a total success. This was the one hundredth final and it was fitting that Old Carthusians were taking part as they participated in the very first one. Surprisingly, although entering all of them, this was the first time they've won it, with only 4 more losing finals to their credit prior to this one. Old Meadonians made it two in a row, having lost last year's final as well. It was the referee rather than the match that was the talking point for the 'Hopperati'. Punctual start - good, but he played over 5 minutes injury time in the first half. There quite clearly wasn't 5 minutes of stoppages of any kind so I really don't know

what he got out of it. I know what Old Meadonians got out of it, they scored on 92 and a half minutes when the teams should have already been back in the changing rooms enjoying their half time oranges. 17-minute half time, 96 for the second half, and of course the obligatory extra 60 seconds onto each half of extra time. 2 hours 37 minutes to play 2 hours of football, what's that all about?

The Bank of England ground is well worth a visit just to see the sort of facilities you can have if you print your own money.

04/20