

TT No.152: Keith Aslan - Saturday 11th May 2019; **CASTLE DONINGTON** v Mayfield; Midlands Regional Alliance; Kick-Off: 14.08; Result: 2-5; Admission: Free; Programme: £1.50p; Attendance: 38 (18 home, 2 away & 18 neutral)

Usually a ten-minute bus ride from Long Eaton gets you to this one, but not this weekend with rail replacement buses between Bedford and Corby making an Antarctic expedition the easier option. So today it's a ride all over the midlands in a desperate search for trains that are actually running and ends up with a bus from Derby. As with most buses round this part of the world it's an excellent service but £7.50p return is just silly. Castle Donington is a quaint market town where you will never go hungry or thirsty and strolling down the sleepy high street it's hard to believe that within a mile radius is the Donington Park Race Circuit, and East Midlands International Airport.

The one-off programme turned this match into a Groundhoppers' jamboree, and while I don't have many friends most of the ones I do have were here. Among the luminaries, present were the *Groundhop UK* supremo and all three regular contributors to *'Travellers Tales'* I thought it would be a good idea if we all did a report on the match giving three different perspectives, my fellow scribes decided I should do one on my own. The programme is worthy of note, 20 pages of quality reading material with plenty of interesting stuff. Which was the only Cup Final to be played with an orange ball? Who is the only footballer to appear on *The Sgt. Pepper's Lonely-Hearts Club Band* album cover? The answers are here and the report on the deciding match for this season's Midland Alliance Championship defy credibility. Perennial no-hopers Allestree won it and in the second half of their final match, a 4-3 win over Moira, they lost and regained the championship five times. Their 4th goal deep into injury time gave them first place above Melbourne Dynamo by virtue of having scored one more goal with points and goal difference being identical.

Today's match was played at Donnington Castle FC's headquarters which although where all their other teams are based, isn't the location of most first team fixtures and is only used during the cricket season. They want to move back here permanently as the facilities are much better than where they usually play over the other side of town, but the pitch is better. They want to bring the pitch here up to standard so they can return. I must say it looked ok to me. Tea and Coffee was on sale for a bargain 60p. a cup. Sandwich's and cake were available for a donation, not the best pricing structure when groundhoppers are your main customers. While I always avoid clichés like the plague this really was a game of two halves. Donnington cruising, 2-0 up at half time, they somehow managed to lose 2-5. Many thanks go to the secretary whose hospitality was exemplary and a good day out was had by all.

The police decided to escort the Leeds United supporters to their evening match at Derby just as my bus was coming back into town. They blocked the road and meant

the last part of my journey was completed at walking pace and I missed my train which on top of my Magical Mystery Tour round the midlands made for a much later than anticipated arrival back at my country dacha. I shall genuinely miss all this over the summer when Saturdays don't have the same meaning.

04/20