

TT No.26: *Keith Aslan* - Saturday 8th September 2018; **NEWENT** v Malmesbury Victoria; Hellenic League Division 1 West; Kick Off: 12.59; Result: 0-2; Admission & Glossy programme: £2; Attendance: 41 (33 home, 2 away & 6 neutral).

With Newent's promotion to step 6 it appeared on my must do list, but logistics dictated an early kick off was needed so with today's 13.00 start there was only ever going to be one destination for yours truly. Why such an early kick off I hear you ask. Today was of course the Newent Onion Fayre. Like myself up to a few days ago I suspect that wouldn't mean much to anybody (other than onions are likely to be involved), but this is a major event round this part of the world. Fifteen thousand turn up crammed into a village with a population of just over five thousand. I realised just how big it was at Gloucester Bus Station with the queue for the Newent Bus stretching for 30 yards. The bus was 'chocker' with people standing on the upper deck, I dread to think what it was like downstairs, and well done to the driver for letting everyone onto the bus which ran well above its capacity. Incidentally Gloucester's new bus station is still being built, the local council could raise funds by running a sweepstake on what year it will actually be finished.

The hourly bus from Gloucester stops right outside the ground but I stayed on for another one and a half miles to visit the Onion Fayre in the village. I've never seen so many stalls plus live groups, a massive funfair and of course a truly awe-inspiring display of onions. Alas I had to leave for the match before the onion eating competition got going. Newent's ground is a little gem. Neat, tidy with nice views, and a comfortable clubhouse that sold hot food and drinks throughout, and in keeping with local events, I was asked if I wanted onions on my hot dog. How could I refuse. The foundations are in place for a paved walkway, stand and floodlights all of which are completely pointless for a home attendance of 33. Indeed, there is a large area of cover outside the clubhouse with tables and chairs which would comfortably accommodate the entire crowd if the weather turned nasty. This is everything a village club should be and why are the FA, who should be helping teams like this, forcing them to spend money they haven't got on facilities they don't need. Long may clubs like this prosper in spite of having to belong to such a clueless organization. They will be celebrating their centenary next season and have managed quite well without floodlights for the first 99 years of their existence.

The home manager was not happy that 4 of his players were on holiday, why couldn't they go in June he moaned, and with a weakened team they were always going to come out second best to unbeaten Malmesbury. The game ended on a bit of a downer when a player received a serious looking injury in the 92nd minute. When a stretcher was called the referee blew for full time, if only he had finished the game on 90 minutes the player could have spent the rest of the afternoon

enjoying the Onion Fayre rather than spending it in the A & E. Lovely club, lovely people, lovely programme and lovely onions.

04/20