

TT No.79: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 22nd December 2018; **Shipston Excelsior v Castle Vale Town**; Total Motion Midland League Division 3; Result: 1-1; Attendance: 35 approx.

With many leagues below Step 5 & 6 declining to play today the best area to go for my fix was the Cotswolds and so we decided to visit what I believe is the most southerly ground in the Total Motion Midland League. I was a bit worried about the league's sponsors, but investigation later on revealed that they are a car and van leasing company and not anything to do with resolving constipation problems as I had first feared! The ground can be found in the delightful town of Shipston-on-Stour, which is about 10 miles south of Stratford-upon-Avon. We arrived here early enough to have a wander around the town first of all, something I don't do enough of on my days out. Then it was time for lunch before returning to the club to wash it down with a pint before the game started. The bar is upstairs in the social club and here we encountered a lot of non-playing players. Later I was told that this was the Sunday side, getting 'warmed up' before they headed out for a night in Stratford-upon-Avon later on that night. I wasn't expecting too much from this game. The hosts are bottom of this division and the visitors were only a few places above them. But as we watched the match from the decent sized stand (no seats) I was pleasantly surprised as both sides expounded a lot of energy and they both gave it a go. However, both sides gave the ball away a lot and you could see why they were where they are in the league. But they both created a number of chances, the visitors more so. Back to the clubhouse at half time and my unasked question of why don't some of the Sunday side turn out and play for the Saturday side to help them climb the league was soon answered. They were in no fit state to do so. Back to the game and on 55 minutes Castle Vale took the lead on 55 minutes. The shot took a big deflection and the keeper stood no chance, even though he decided not to move for it anyway. Two minutes later there was a punch up, right in front of not only us, but also the referee observer standing next to us. So, it wasn't too surprising that the two protagonists got sent off. Further bookings followed later on, by which time the hosts were starting to look worthy of a point, which they got by way of a 20-yard direct free kick on 84 minutes. The visitors offered nothing in reply and as the players walked off at the final whistle, they were cheered off the pitch by the Sunday side, still in the bar, but now hanging out through some open windows. It was like they'd won the league. Soon we were on our way home and as we left the bar staff were hoping that the rat-arsed Sunday side would soon be on their way as well! Another really enjoyable day out.