

TT No.80: *Keith Aslan* - Saturday 29th December 2018; **LONGRIDGE** v Cleator Moor Celtic; North West Counties League Division 1 North; Kick-Off: 15.00; Result: 4-0; Admission & Programme: £4 for geriatrics: Attendance: 131 (120 home, 10 away & 1 neutral)

It's a half hour bus ride for this one with a 12-minute service from Preston city centre. Preston looked much the same as it always does. Dispiriting. By contrast Longridge is a pleasant town, anywhere that has a glazing business called '*A touch of Glass*' is ok by me. The old station has been turned into a heritage centre with a café and would have been the ideal place to tarry a while had it not been closed for Christmas.

The match was played to the stunning backdrop of the Forest of Bowland Fells with two stands, one older and the other an *Atcost* structure erected to please our old friends the ground graders. The clubhouse has a TV and hot drinks with free 'biccies', plus everything a hungry hopper could desire. The meat pies were a treat and they didn't run out in spite of some greedy individuals (well just me actually) scoffing two of them.

While some clubs fail to issue over the Christmas period, no problems here with the glossy programme, free on entry, bang up to date with a report on their previous home game on Boxing Day. Richard Allen was the subject of the player profile and he supports, hold the front page, Manchester United. Playing North West Counties football at least he should know where Manchester actually is, which gives him an advantage over most of their 'fans'. I also liked the page with the latest news, and a map of the clubs, from the South West Peninsula League! It was written by someone who calls himself *Zimmerframe Zidane*.

The match was a strange one, I don't ever recall seeing a more one-sided match that didn't involve Ferring. And yet the home side failed to score for an hour and a quarter of the game. For the first 29 minutes they contented themselves with belting shots into the next postcode before finding their range and scoring four before the interval. At half-time (17 minutes for some reason) the talk was all about how many more Longridge would get in part two. None as it happened with another 45 minutes of total dominance producing more misses than the latest Applejacks' single on *Juke Box Jury* (If you're under 60 you won't get that one). The approach play was superb and it's not hard to see why they are top of the league, but the finishing was woeful. Give credit to the Cleator Moor goalkeeper who was on the top of his game, but really Longridge should have got double figures. The crowd became increasingly restless, not the usual reaction when your team is 4-0 up.

Longridge are a club on the up. Ten years ago, they were strutting their stuff in the Preston and District League, now they are red hot favourites for promotion to

the North West Counties Premier Division. Surprisingly their reserves in the West Lancashire League are bottom of the table and have yet to win this season.

Walking back to the station all the Christmas lights were on in Preston. Still dispiriting though.

04/20