

TT No.45: Keith Aslan - Saturday 12th October 2019; Bedfordshire League Ground Hop 2019 - **Match 1: REAL HAYNES** v Blunham; Bedfordshire County League Div. 3; Kick-Off: 10.28; Result 7-0; Admission: Free; Programme: £2; Attendance: 196 (mostly neutral).

The hop season draws to a close as always with the excellent Bedfordshire extravaganza, another organizational triumph for the flame haired Craig Dabbs. Transport for the carless was in a fleet of four private cars, it was a sign of my importance that I was allotted a spot in the leader's car. In case the Sat. Nav. broke down I had my trusty 1961 edition Ordnance Survey Map with me, a snip at 6/6 (that's 32 and a half pence for youngsters).

The village of Haynes was the first port of call and they'd really pushed the boat out for this game with advertising on social media and radio interviews as well as sticking flyers in local letterboxes. They were hoping for a crowd of 500 which they were never going to get but they should be well satisfied with an attendance pushing 200. Now I'm all for clubs making money but I declined a can of *Coke* when the young lady tried to charge me £2 for it. When I pointed out that's not what it costs, I was told with a completely straight face that it was due to the 'Sugar Tax'. Do I really look that stupid? Probably. They soon sussed they weren't going to sell any at that price and halved it, so I re ordered my fizz asking how they managed to get around the Sugar Tax. Sarcasm is a waste of time around these parts. The large slice of coffee and walnut cake for £1.50 was a much better deal, as were the bacon rolls, with the bacon burnt and crispy just as God intended.

The match was somewhat one sided with the home team top of the league and very good with the away team down the bottom and not so good. It turned out to be an unequal struggle between Haynes and the Blunham goalkeeper who after allowing the first goal to slip through his hands made amends by keeping the score down to single figures.

then it was on to:

Match 2: STOPSLEY UNITED v Harlington Juniors; Bedfordshire County League Div. 3; Kick-Off: 13.40; Result: 2-3; Admission: Free; Programme: £2; Attendance: 128 (mostly neutral).

Bit of a dispute with the kick-off time, it should have been 1.30 but the league had it down as 1.45 so there was a compromise. It was the league's fault and not Craig's as he kept telling everybody. The ground was a revelation, it had three tiers of terracing running the full length of the touchline. With a row of plastic seats for the subs. etc. Harlington chose not to use theirs but they didn't go to waste and proved a welcome respite for the elderly. Stopsley took a bit of time to sort the catering out, but when it got going the cheese toasties proved to be a winner.

This was the best game of the lot, plenty of action, not all of it involving the ball, with a cracking fight breaking out in the second half. When the melee eventually subsided the two number eights got sent off. Unfortunately, I had to rush away at the final whistle for my transport so didn't get to see if the Stopsley miscreant made good his threat to see his opposite number after the game (and I don't think it was to discuss the finer points of the match). 3-1 to Stopsley, Harlington got a goal back late doors which resulted in additional naughtiness as they went for the equalizer, more bookings plus an assault on the Harlington goalkeeper which amazingly went unpunished. The referee got taken ill at half time, running around a football pitch when you are seventy is never a good idea, with a substitute referee fortunately available to try and control the second half brawling. All-in-all excellent entertainment.

then it was on to:

Match 3: LANCOT PARK v Luton All Stars; Bedfordshire County League Div. 3; Kick-Off: 16.17; Result: 5-1; Admission: Free; Programme: £2; Attendance: 118 (mostly neutral).

People kept telling me that I've probably done this ground, but with nothing in my records, I was quite confident I hadn't. I had of course, with the fact I didn't get a programme meaning I didn't count it. Now it's well and truly counted. We were a bit tight for time getting to this one which meant I had to rush my Chicken Curry. It deserved better. Still managed to get through some more homemade cakes afterwards. Lancot Park play at Dunstable Cricket Club with the pitch being a lengthy yomp from the clubhouse. Tottenhoe were playing next door, in fact their pitch is far closer to the changing rooms than the home sides. A relatively straightforward win for Lancot Park brought the days goal tally to eighteen. As for the food consumption, best not to think about it. A few real keenie's went on to a fourth game with the evening kick off at British Airways FC. I returned to my country dacha well satisfied with my day out.

04/20