

**TT No.64: Keith Aslan** - Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2019; **SHARPNESS** v Patchway; Gloucester County League; Kick-Off: 14.01; Result: 6-0; Admission and programme: Donation; Attendance: 35 (28 home, 6 away & 1 neutral)

I woke up this morning in Swindon which I must emphasise was pre-planned, I didn't just go out on Friday evening and get lost. As I was already three quarters of the way there only one place to go today, refinishing the Gloucester County League for the zillionth time at Sharpness. It's a Saturday so of course it was raining. I got soaked but not a unique experience for me.

The 62 from Bristol Bus Station is a funny route. Every two hours most buses go straight up the M32/M4/M5 and arrive in Berkley in no time. There are two buses a day that go the scenic route through the intermediate villages but part of the diversion is that it stops right outside the ground after the game. It goes the one and half miles from Berkley turns around at the entrance and returns from whence it came. The bizarre thing about this detour is the ground is in the middle of nowhere and I can't imagine anybody would ever want to use the stop (apart from me of course). The outward journey had two passengers, me and a freeloader, and the subsidy on this route must be enormous, can't see it lasting much longer. I was puzzled as to how my bus was due to leave Bay 19 at the bus station at exactly the same time as another service. We got around that by the 62 leaving three minutes early. Naughty. The buses fit in perfectly with either a 2 or 2.30 kick off but do it quickly while the council are still throwing money at the service.

It's a one and a half mile walk from Berkley to the ground down a country lane. It was pouring with rain I was drenched and with no guarantee the game would actually be on when I arrived, I had one of my 'What am I doing here' moments. Got to the ground in time to see the ref. coming in from his pitch inspection, no problems, and five minutes later I was clutching my programme drying out in front of a wood fire in the clubhouse with a cup of coffee and a cheese and onion roll and 'What am I doing here' metamorphosed into 'this is the only place in the world I want to be'. Football can do that to you.

Indicative of how this match went, Patchway's man of the match was their goalkeeper. As part of the FA's useless '*Respect*' campaign the league are operating a points system for players sin-binned, booked or sent off for dissent with cash prizes for teams with the lowest number of points at the end of the season. I've got a better idea, why not just tell referees to strictly apply the laws on dissent and send offending players off. Or am I missing something? As Patchway at one stage had two players in the sin bin I would suggest the 'lack of points mean prizes' system isn't working. Mention for Greg Wentland, the referee, who added an extra three minutes onto the match. With the score at 6-0 I wonder what he felt the purpose of this was. The rain had abated during the match but if you do need to keep dry, and this looks a good pitch in wet weather, the spacious smoking area outside the clubhouse has a roof and is a perfectly adequate vantage point to

watch the match. As already stated, this is one of the most remote grounds in the league with some fine views across the River Severn of the mist shrouded Forest of Dean. A funny place to build a football ground but Sharpness FC has been around since 1900.

Waiting for the bus after the game with gathering gloom in the middle of nowhere with no actual bus stop, I couldn't help wondering what I would do if it didn't turn up. It did and I was happy.

04/20