

**TT No.70: *Brian Buck*** - Saturday 23rd November 2019; **Buckingham United v Pitstone & Ivinghoe**; Spartan South Midlands League Division 2; Venue: played at Lace Hill Sports & Community Centre, Buckingham; Result: 0-3; Attendance: 72.

Today I selected this game, partly because of the weather, as the host club are known to have a good draining pitch and partly because I didn't want to encounter fans of Spurs, their near neighbours and West Ham United if I went into London by train. So, although I could have driven to this ground in little over an hour, to please Mrs Buck I made the day much longer by travelling most of the way by using the X5 Bus, which runs from Cambridge to Oxford. Using my bus pass. I joined the half hourly service at Great Barford and after it negotiated Bedford and Milton Keynes I alighted at Tesco Buckingham, Stop B just under two hours later and my journey wasn't quite as tortuous as I thought it might be.

The ground was little more than a five-minute walk from here, but after confirming that my match was on, I was on my travels again, this time to The Mitre pub. I had rung up Lace Hill Community Centre on the previous afternoon to ascertain if the community centre had a bar. The well-spoken lady told me that it hadn't, but then offered to email me a map of Buckingham, showing every pub marked. I gratefully accepted and she particularly recommended The Mitre, not only because it was a good pub, but because you could walk along the disused Bletchley to Banbury railway line to get to it and this I did. No chance of getting run over by a passing train here as the line was closed to passengers in 1964 and altogether two years later. By now it was raining and walking along the tall tree lined track, with the last of the autumnal leaves falling, it was a bit like walking through the English version of the Amazon Rainforest. Soon I reached the pub and here I encountered a rarity in that no sooner had I grasped my pint than I saw Spurs score in the live TV Match. Usually the opposite happens, which is why I don't watch them play on TV too much. Accompanied by a like-minded Groundhopper, we were back at the ground in plenty of time for the start and by now a goodly number of other hoppers had also appeared. There were enough programmes to go around although a few people had to wait for some more inserts to arrive as they had run out due to the high demand on the day.

On the pitch the hosts, joining the SSML from the North Bucks & District League this season, were no match for top of the table Pitstone and although they played better after the break they were comfortably beaten, conceding initially after just 87 seconds. Further goals on 36 and 83 minutes finished them off. The match was played out in wet and uncomfortable conditions, but the pitch, on top of a hill, held up well. After the game had finished, I stayed on. Despite the Community Centre saying that there isn't a bar here, the club improvised and on top of food and drink they also brought in a TV to show Final Score. Then it was a wet walk back to the bus stop before making the reverse journey home to find that I'd missed nearly all of Strictly. Almost the perfect day then!

