

TT No.71: Keith Aslan - Saturday 30th November 2019; **IDE HILL** v Stansfield Oxford & Bermondsey Reserves; Kent County Premier; Kick Off: 14.00 on the dot; Result: 2-3; Admission: Free; Programme: Free but everybody made a donation; Attendance: 41 (23 home, 8 away & 10 neutral).

Definitely well up in the Top Ten of scenic places to watch football, situated in the middle of the picture postcard village of Ide Hill this is the highest football ground in Kent, 708 feet according to *Wikipedia*, with the glorious panorama of the Kentish Weald as a backdrop. Which makes it strange is that most home games are played in a 3G cage 8 miles away at Wrotham. Not finding favour with the ground graders the original move was forced upon them, but having now built brand new dressing rooms to bring the ground up to speed they still chose to play most of their home games on the plastic. The players prefer it apparently. Well stuff them, Ide Hill is the only place a club called Ide Hill should be playing and while the pitch allegedly doesn't drain very well it looked ok to me considering the rain we've had. There were nearby games called off. The eight-page glossy colour programme was Issue 1, there will be more to follow but I hope they don't expect the same take up rate as today's game. Disappointingly their next home fixture is shown as being played back on the 3G. Have you no soul?

If travelling by public transport you can't. Ide Hill has a few buses Mon-Fri but nothing on a Saturday. For the athletic hopper (surely an oxymoron) it's a five mile walk from Sevenoaks station which three of our number actually did. Good luck to them, some quality grovelling obtained a lift for me. They all found lifts back which is just as well as walking down footpath-less unlit lanes in the dark does not make for a long life. On the subject of buses, or lack of, Ide Hill has two ornate wooden bus shelters which would have one hopper I know reaching for his camera.

Ide secretary Keith McGinn is wonderfully helpful with his daughter running the tea bar. He's been at the club for 37 years which must have made him about 10 years old when he joined. As for the opposition it gets a bit complicated. Technically they are the reserve side of South East Counties League team Stansfield. But they have their own reserve team playing in a lower division of the Kent County League. The real first team aren't allowed to call themselves Stansfield O & B, so they are just Stansfield. Can't have Oxford or Bermondsey in your name but calling yourself after a Mr. Stansfield is ok? That's just weird.

One of the linesmen had major mobility problems. He made me look like Usain Bolt (or at least Usain Bolt with dodgy knees). He could barely hobble from the changing room down onto the pitch and running wasn't an option. His lack of movement was of much debate, the general consensus was that limping the line probably wasn't his best option for a Saturday afternoon activity. I hope he gets to the top of the NHS waiting list soon as I suspect do the players. 0-1 at half-time there was a bucket load of action in the second half with the away manager seemingly rehearsing for his other job as a Gordon Ramsey tribute act.

Another lovely place visited which I wouldn't have known existed without this wonderful hobby, and to cap it all the day was filled with sunshine both metaphorically and metrologically.

04/20